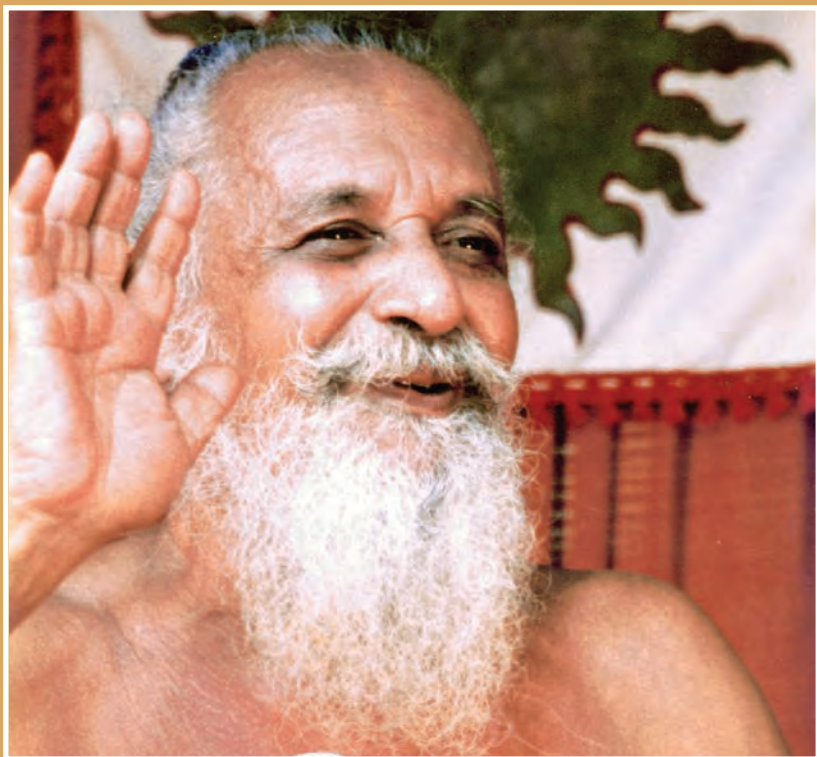


2013 Golden Jubilee edition

BIHAR YOGA®

Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 3

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 3



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23rd–27th October 2013

Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 3

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

*Satsangs given by Sri Swamiji at Rikhiapeeth, Deoghar,
in 1997*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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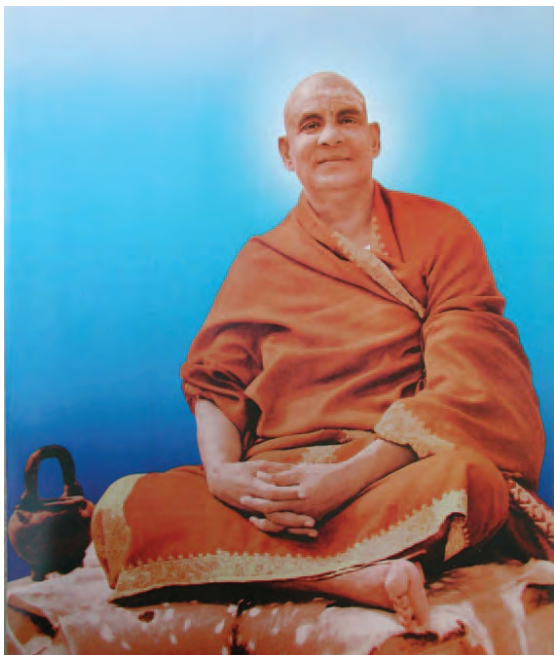
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

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Satsang 1

9 September 1997



Are vairagya and nishkama karma one and the same thing, or are they different? If different, how so?

There is a difference. *Vairagya*, non-attachment, is not linked to karma or action in any way. *Vairagya* is something else. The things you have seen and heard keep resurfacing in your memories. Do you fear them or crave them? If you have enjoyed something, relished a good meal or have worn fine clothes, do you not recall those images again and again? Do you not desire those things again and again? That is *raga* or attraction. *Raga* is a compelling force in the mind, a craze, a frenzy. The same thoughts keep on reverberating in the mind; that is *raga*. If

somebody has been unkind or made life difficult for you, do you not relive that over and over again? Yes, you do. That is *dwesha*, aversion or hate. That which you do not want is *dwesha*.

Both *raga* and *dwesha* are born of the mind. They are two sides of the same coin. We do not have two minds; we have one mind, and we like one side and dislike the other side. That is the tendency of the mind, to be attracted by one part and repelled by another part, to feel *raga* with one part and *dwesha* with the other. We have a thirst and longing for things we have experienced. To exercise restraint over these longings is *vairagya*.

Vairagya or non-attachment does not mean that you belong to a certain sect. Yes, there is a sect known as *Vairagi*. They wear white clothes, have long beards, wear a *tilak* or dot on their forehead, a *mala* around their neck, and they have certain food restrictions. That is a cult or sect, and that is not what we are discussing; we are talking about the word '*vairagya*'. *Vairagya* is the absence of both attachment and repulsion.

Where are *raga* and *dwesha* born? They are born of *kama*, craving, desire; and *krodha*, anger, rage or disappointment. If you desire something and succeed in attaining it, are you angry? Imagine that you wanted a house and you got a house. You would be happy, not angry. You wanted a son and you had a son. Would you fly into a rage? When your desires are unfulfilled, you get angry. Anger is born out of desire, and aversion is born of anger. The *Bhagavad Gita* (3:37) says that both are born out of *rajoguna*:

*Kama esha krodha esha rajogunasamudbhavah;
Mahashano mahaapapmaa viddhyenamiha vairinam.*

It is desire, it is anger born of the quality of *rajas*, all-devouring and all-sinful; know this as the foe in this world.

A mahashana is somebody with an enormous appetite; one who can never be satisfied, just like fire. Desire is an animal that keeps on devouring. No matter how many wishes are fulfilled,

the hunger remains. Similarly, anger is also always there, since disappointments are present throughout our lives. There is not a single human being on this earth who has never been disappointed. There is not a single person whose every wish has been fulfilled. Kama and krodha, desire and anger, are voracious and insatiable and no matter how many desires you fulfil, they never diminish or finish. Hunger is never satisfied and anger is never appeased, and disappointments will be there throughout your life. The *Bhagavad Gita* (3:41) says, therefore, to control the senses and kill the objects of desire:

*Tasmaattvamindriyaanyaadau niyamya bharatarshabha;
Paapmaanam prajahi hyenam jnaanavijnanaananaashanam.*

Therefore, O best of the Bharatas, controlling the senses first, do you kill this sinful thing, the destroyer of knowledge and realization.

Whatever act you perform, it is driven by a desire or a wish, whether for a child, a job, a harvest; you are driven by all these wishes. Sleeping at night, waking in the morning, eating meals, even behind these mundane acts there is a wish. Whatever work you do, there is a wish behind that, and that desire is for yourself. Why do you want a son? For yourself. Why do you want a house? For yourself. Everything is for yourself. All your wishes are for yourself. What you wish for others has a different nature. What you desire for yourself, the wish that has an association with yourself, is kama. When the focus of your desire is not for yourself but for somebody else, then that wish is selfless and is *nishkama*.

You do not love your son because he is your son; you do not love your wife because she is your wife. You love them for yourself, for a selfish reason. This is what the scriptures say. Whatever relationships there are in this world, the focal point or epicentre is 'I'. A relationship where the other person, the 'you' becomes the epicentre, is sacrifice. Right now, 'I' is the epicentre; whatever is happening is happening for me. When it starts happening for other people, it is *nishkama*, selfless.

Nishkama is *paramartha*, the ultimate good, the universal good. There is no desire in it; rather, there is a *sankalpa*, resolve. If you are concerned about the wellbeing of someone, and you want to do seva for someone, then that is not a desire but a resolve. This is the difference between *kamana*, wish, and a *sankalpa*. That is why I always say, “It is my resolve”, not my wish.

There are a lot of people who perform seva with a motive. There is a selfish intent or purpose however great or small it may be. Why do you serve someone else? Perhaps to achieve recognition, so that people praise you; this too falls in the category of selfishness. Service without any expectation of the personal result is very difficult. If you feed a donkey, it is neither a sin nor a righteous action. That seva through which you will get nothing: not name, not wealth, not recognition, not peace and not sorrow, is nishkama.

When Mother Teresa came to Kolkata forty to fifty years ago, what did she do? She picked up dying people from the street. People used to ridicule her. They thought she was mentally unstable. Those people were going to die anyway, so what was the point in taking them in? They did die in time, yet she picked them up from the dirt and filth of the pavement and gave them shelter. Why did she do this? Was it compassion? No. There are many ways to search for God, just as there are many ways to reach Kolkata; you can go from Mumbai, from Chennai, from many places. There is not just one road that leads to Kolkata. In the same way, to reach God every person has a unique way. You start from where you are. If you want to go to Kolkata from Deoghar, you do not need to go to Mumbai, you can go directly. Many people do not think about this properly; however, there are many ways to reach God.

If your son, wife or dear friend is in pain it hurts you also, doesn't it? However, if a stranger is in pain you are not affected. Why does the pain of your loved one hurt you, and not that of a stranger? In the Vedanta philosophy, the word used for this is *dvaita*, or dualism. Your spirit is connected to your wife, child, brother and so on, thus their pain becomes

your pain. Until your spirit connects in the same way with others, your heart cannot be purified, and until our hearts are pure, we will not see even a shadow of God, for God is seen in a mirror. It has been said:

*Jo mukhadaa dekhana chahiye to darpana maanjata rahiye;
Jo darpana laage kaai to mukhadaa lakhaa na jaai.*

If you want to see your face, clean the mirror;
If the mirror is dirty the face cannot be seen.

If you want to see your face, where will you look? You look in the mirror, and if the mirror is blackened and dirty, of course you will clean it. Just as you cannot see your face if the mirror is dirty, the same principle applies to God. You yourself are God, but you cannot see yourself. My guru, Swami Sivananda, used to say that to do this you must admit yourself into a spiritual school where the first level, the first grade, is *seva*. The second grade is love; the third grade is give, give and give; and the fourth is purify your soul. In the fifth level, you meditate. The sixth level is university, where you have the *darshan* or vision of God. You can read whatever you like: the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Ramayana* or the *Srimad Bhagavatam*; you may perform *pooja*, rites and rituals. However, that alone will not take you anywhere. Just chopping up the vegetables is not enough; you have to season them with salt. You cannot make halva with only *suji*, ground flour; you have to add sugar.

Mother Teresa said, "Everybody worships God in the church. I have seen wealthy people worship God. They come with their children to the temple, they ring the bell and they perform the arati, but they fail to embrace the poor soul who is lying on the pavement afflicted by some incurable disease." Interestingly, Mother Teresa used to say, "I have not brought him with me to cure him. The man who is suffering from disease needs love as much as you do." He also wants to be loved and have someone show him affection. Just like a beautiful woman loves a man and a mother loves her child, everyone wants to be loved; men, women, all want to be loved

by their spouses, by their children, by their parents. The man lying on the pavement also wants to be loved, yet who will love him?

I will tell you about an incident in 1950. I had already taken sannyasa, and there was a Kumbha Mela going on in Haridwar. There were hundreds of thousands of people participating. When people go there, they visit the neighbouring places also. One evening my gurubhai, Swami Chidananda, found a tiny, frail man lying on the side of the road. He was covered with flies and there was a bad odour emanating from his body. Swami Chidananda returned to the ashram, picked up a gunny bag, put the man inside it and brought him back to the ashram. He put him in a small room in the ashram and cleansed the wounds with Dettol and some other medicines. The man was suffering from leprosy, oozing leprosy. There are two types of leprosy: one where pus oozes out and the other where you get white patches on your skin.

When people discovered he was a leper, there was an uproar about his being brought into the ashram. The ashram is a public place and all kinds of people go there, good people, weak people, people who believe in untouchability. Swami Sivananda heard about the incident and asked for a hut to be made for him. He was given shelter in the ashram and we were all given duties to look after him in turns. In the ashram, everybody has to do seva. We had to bathe him, dress his wounds, give him medicine, clean his bedpan. I used to get very angry. The man couldn't speak a sentence without being abusive and it really bothered me. We were doing seva for him and the least he could do was talk nicely to us. He cursed us with every sentence. He did not think, 'People have brought me here, they are doing seva for me, they feed me, dress me, look after me, give me medicine.' No, he was not grateful.

One day when I was on duty, I lost my temper. On account of my background, I was not accustomed to abusive language. I had never heard a raised voice or had anyone order me around, and this fellow was cursing away! I went to

Swami Chidananda and told him I would not perform any duty involving the man. Swami Sivananda found out and four or five days later he explained to me that this was not just seva. He said, "This is cleansing you. It is a way to look inside yourself. If there is love or hate within you, how will you express it? If urine has not collected inside you, how will you expel it? In the same way, if there is no love inside you, how will you give it to those outside? After all, a person can only give from what he has; if there is hate inside you, then that is what you will give. If he has said you are bad, do you become bad? He is only expressing what is inside him. How does that affect you?" Swami Sivananda explained these things to me.

Mother Teresa would pick up as many orphans as she could find and take them in. This is the best example of seva. The best way to reach God is to serve those who have been discarded and rejected by others, not because they will get better, but because they will feel better. Those who are dying will surely die. One day the leper, too, disappeared from the ashram. He left a note saying, "I have come here to die, not to get better. I am a sinner, I am filthy; if I die on the banks of the Ganga, if I take my last breath on the banks of the Ganga, at least my next life will be better." Swami Chidananda had a different sentiment. I had a different sentiment.

The word 'nishkama' is a very practical word and is both superior to and more difficult than vairagya. The whole of the *Bhagavad Gita* explains and expounds upon this. It is based on *nishkama karma yoga*, work offered selflessly. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sanjaya was asked, "What is going on in Dharmakshetra and Kurukshetra?" He replied, "This body is the battlefield of Kurukshetra, and both the good side, the Pandavas, and the villains, the Kauravas, can be seen in us." Sanjaya says in the last verse, "Oh King, what shall I narrate to you? The side on which Sri Krishna is, the side on which the wielder of the bow, Arjuna, is, that is the side of victory. That is where wealth and prosperity are. That is where magnificence and power are." The archer Arjuna personifies the selfless karma

yogi, the nishkama karma yogi; and Yogeshwara, the lord of yoga, Sri Krishna, personifies the Higher Self within us.

The person who performs selfless actions always has a clear conscience and receives prosperity, beauty, wealth, auspiciousness and power. Whatever he undertakes will be successful, whether it is teaching yoga or playing badminton. *Vibhooti* refers to the special ways in which the Lord reveals Himself. Some people sing very well, that is vibhooti. Mahatma Gandhi was blessed with vibhooti; what a method he used to defeat the British! Scientists are gifted with vibhooti. Do you know how one scientist discovered the medicinal qualities of cinchona? An Englishman was burning with fever and was very sleepy. He walked to a well and fell asleep by its side. When he woke up, he drank the water from the well and then took another nap. This time upon waking, his whole body was perspiring and his fever had come down. He thought deeply about how it could have happened. He looked around and saw many cinchona trees. The leaves of these trees had fallen into the well and the medicinal qualities of quinine in the cinchona leaves had cured him. This is vibhooti.

Vibhooti means to have an instant, deep insight. This happened to me also. I come from the background of Vedanta. I have not read a single book on yoga. I have read the commentaries by Shankaracharya and by Ramanujam and studied them all. I know them by heart. What is atma? What is paramatma? This is what I studied. I did not know yoga at all; however, I thought ‘This is what will work’, and it did. I had opened a small school in Munger. It was called the Fifteen-Day School. People made fun of me. The fee for this school was twenty-one rupees and this included lodging, boarding and tuition. I was told that a naturopathy camp or spa would be more successful, with hot and cold water tubs and different creams and applications. I refused. Look around you today. People are opening yoga schools all over the world. This is vibhooti. Now we have the Bihar Yoga Bharati University. You watch, in ten years there will be three universities. People might ridicule the idea of a yoga

university, yet in ten years time everybody will start opening yoga universities. The thought comes from an intuition, a spiritual insight. I am explaining the meaning of the word vibhooti; you hear a voice from inside, from your soul, and a thought emerges. Scientists, authors, poets and even valiant warriors like Shivaji, Maharana Pratap and the Rani of Jhansi must have all experienced vibhooti. This vibhooti manifests in some people. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna says, “When you experience the manifestation of such a vibhooti, understand that it was born from a part of my light.”

During the Partition, I was on duty in Bangladesh. The truck carrying the grains for the refugee camp was looted. I asked myself, ‘How can this be tolerated?’ The next day, I picked up my gun and walked into the scene. I threatened the thugs with their lives, and they ran away. This went on for a couple of days. Then somebody recognized me and I thought to myself, ‘My life cannot be so cheap that I lose it over these stupid people.’ I instantly made up my mind. The institution was run by some Marwaris and I handed over my resignation to them and left for Kolkata, otherwise I would have been finished way back then!

I went to Rishikesh. In those days, Mirabehen used to visit there frequently. Together we bought some land about seven to eight miles away and we used it as a refuge for lepers. We built a shelter. Every day, the ashram would send a bundle of *bidis*, local cigarettes, and we would go there to read the *Ramacharitamanas*. A doctor was paid to provide for their medication. Whatever help we could get from the government, we ensured it reached them. We did whatever we could for them, but why did we do it? We did it because we could not understand all that was being said to us. Until iron reaches a certain temperature, it is not possible to bend it. Once it has melted then you can do anything with it.

In my sannyasa life I have faced many ups and downs, many hurdles, and I always thought, ‘Whatever else happens, I will not leave sannyasa.’ Sannyasa is the pinnacle; how can I become a householder after that? Sannyasa is the ultimate.

After becoming a collector, if I became a peon, how would it feel? Marriage after sannyasa; what can be more terrible than that? A sannyasin is considered the ultimate. I thought, 'If I cannot live like a sannyasin, at least I will try.' One must have faith in oneself or in one's guru, but Swami Sivananda was no more; who then could I ask? I was not going to listen to just anyone. One book says one thing, another book says another thing. I decided, 'The day God sends me a message, the day I have an instruction from Him, "Do this work", I will do it.' Today, whatever I am doing is in accordance with His instructions.

Isn't it possible that the ego can come into play? I am not talking about you, but won't the ego manifest?

Yes, the ego can surface and if it does, let it. Do not let the little issues drain you of energy. Do good for others. If your ego surfaces, how will it bother others? If the ego is taking over, let it and continue to do good for others. If you pay attention to your ego, you will have difficulty serving others. Therefore, continue to be egoistic and continue to do good. This is very necessary. You do not do something good for others because something good will happen to them. Everybody in the world needs love. Everybody in the world wishes that someone will love them. A sick person also wants love, a dying person also wants love, a leper who is suffering also wants love. A person lying at a street corner, near a gutter, also wants the same thing. The beggar on the street, who has no mother or father and no home, also wants love. Love is the main requirement for every human being. If you give love to someone, you are giving it to God.

Ultimately, the God you are searching for is within you. That stone god is false; the power that exists is within you. God is not in the stone statue; He is in you. The stone statue is your projection. God is in you. You gave Him the form of a statue. Passion is in you, and you express it to a woman. Greed is in you and it finds expression in your wealth. Anger is in you, and you vent it on someone else. Lust, anger, greed, devotion,

compassion are all in you. Since you are constantly expressing these emotions, you do not realize they are within you.

If it was easy to be selfless, there would not be so many difficulties in this world. A man has a small family consisting of his parents, his wife and children. If the whole world was one big home, things would be very difficult. You would need such gigantic utensils and stoves. This is just a practical division: your house, my house, their house; separate houses for convenience. If the world's entire population of five billion people decided to eat at one place, what would happen? Hence, the social structure is such that the husband, wife and their family look after their own home. This is done for convenience and practicality. We are not separate. Your house is separate, my house is separate and our kitchens are separate. My bank account is separate; your bank account is separate. Your wealth is separate; my wealth is separate. However, the sentiment we carry that we are all separate beings is wrong. That is called duality. The idea that we are all one is non-duality.

Swamiji, through medical examination I have learnt that I have a stone in my kidney. What can I do for it?

We have evolved from monkeys, and monkeys are vegetarian. Our ancestors, hundreds of thousands of years ago, were monkeys. There is no other animal that shares a similarity with humans. Look at horses; their knees are the other way around and they cannot stand upright. There is just one animal that can stand up straight and whose palms and fingers are like ours. Due to this, there is a belief that we humans have evolved from monkeys. Monkeys are vegetarians; they can kill, yet they will not eat what they kill. Ask a doctor how many diseases are communicated through meat. This is why you should eat *roti* and *sabji*, bread and vegetables. If meat is prepared at home, do not eat it. Give up eggs, chicken and mutton for the sake of your health. Have gram and peanuts and work hard. Boil water, store it in bottles and keep drinking it. Also drink horse bean water; it breaks up stones. In some sicknesses you have to rest and in some you have to work.

Satsang 2

10 September 1997



Ramacharitamanas

The *Ramacharitamanas* is neither a poem nor a story; it is a mantra. If someone has to learn it, the first thing to do is organize a month-long dedicated session or a nine-day dedicated session in which the book is read from beginning to end, in the form of a sadhana. None of the subjects discussed in the *Ramacharitamanas* pertain to any particular religion, yet they are relevant to the religion of humanity. The format, however, is based on the vedic tradition. The wedding of Rama and Sita, Ravana, the other characters, and all the incidents are vedic. No other religion believes in all this. In no other

religion do they have stories like that of Sita being kidnapped to Lanka, her return, her *agni pariksha*, test by fire, and so on. No other belief system has these stories. They say it is nonsense that Sita became impure only on account of having gone to someone else's place, or that Rama could leave the kingdom simply to uphold his father's promise to his wife. They say that when a child becomes an adult, he should live and think as he wishes. Why should he listen to his parents?

There are many such incidents and the main thrust is on human behaviour and society, the relevance of which changes from time to time. What did Ravana symbolize in those times? Does Ravana mean the same thing today? If God had to take birth today, whom would he kill? Would he slay some dictator? What does Ravana mean in our present situation? Today's evil is corruption. This has spread everywhere, sparing nobody, not you and not him.

There is corruption in India, which is why I say that it is today's Ravana. However, if you try to teach the *Ramayana* to some English or American people, they will not understand the context or symbolism of Ravana as corruption, for corruption does not exist where they are. Who is the Ravana of the West? Sometimes I give discourses on the *Ramayana* there. In the West, people are straightforward and honest. To give a discourse there one has to be sharp, otherwise they will not accept what you say. The story of Rama, the *Ramacharitamanas*, is very popular in many countries: Burma, Thailand, Sumatra, Java, and so on. It is prevalent there as a folk dance and theatrical performance; however, it does not have any influence on the society. They perform the Ramalila, Rama destroys Ravana, they sing, they dance, they perform, yet it is only a form of entertainment. The story is enjoyed by all the people of South-East Asia.

Some westerners read the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Many commentaries have been written on the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and the *Bhagavad Gita*; both have gained acceptance. The *Bhagavad Gita* has found the most acceptance. Many learned people, Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Lokmanya Tilak

and Sri Aurobindo have all translated the *Bhagavad Gita* into English. The work of Adi Guru Shankaracharya on the *Bhagavad Gita* is increasingly taught at universities. It is deeply respected. The subject of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* is popular with westerners, while *Ramacharitamanas* is not.

Ramacharitamanas places more emphasis on *grihastha ashrama*, householder life. The largest chapter is on marital life. The chapters on the exile to the forest, the search for Sita by Hanuman, the events in Lanka and so on are not elaborated upon as much as the chapters on Rama's birth and marriage. The stories of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, on the other hand, all end with the protagonists moving into the *vanaprastha ashrama*, retiring into the forest. After a reign of fifty to sixty years, they hand over the throne to their sons and retire to the forest. In the forest, they meditate on Brahma, from duality move into non-duality, and finally attain *moksha*, liberation. Westerners can appreciate this because the culture in the West is more materialistic and oriented towards gratification; comfort, good food, good clothes, everything has a high standard. This is the Ravana of the West. Everyone who lives there, whether he is a gardener or a peon, aspires to live these standards. If there is a problem with the toilet system, you call the company and they send a plumber. He arrives like a lord in his car with his tools. He will come, shake hands with the lady of the house, he will have a cup of tea and chat for a bit. Then he will work, have another round of tea, he will give a bill and then leave. For an hour's work, he will charge a minimum of thirty to forty dollars, as he wants a high standard of living. If he wants to meditate or perform a pooja, in this also he will maintain his high standard, using a support for his back and head which is bought from the market.

The *Ramayana* does not deal with renunciation, it speaks of devotion. A story about weddings, children, in-laws' home and household environment does not find favour with westerners. That is why I have saved the *Ramacharitamanas* for India and in the West I give discourses on the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and

the *Bhagavad Gita*. They ask me to speak on the *Bhagavad Gita* as it is the kind of book that appeals to modern, educated people. Today's society can relate to it. For example, there is a bank and you work for it. You are not concerned about where the money comes from and where it goes, you are simply concerned with the accounting and tallying. You will only get as much as your salary. You are not concerned if there is a robbery or there is a loss. This is today's culture: detached. There are so many people working in the bank: auditors, accountants, typists, computer operators, managers, and so on, but they are all detached. They perform their individual duties and are not involved with the money. They finish their jobs and go home.

The *Bhagavad Gita* (2:47:1) says: *Karmanyevadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana* – “Your right is to work only, never to its fruits.” This sloka is very appropriate for the West. Your job is to finish a certain task and your responsibility is restricted to that. Whatever role you fulfil as a secretary, cashier, typist, and so on, you are concerned only with that. If you are unhappy with something, you will immediately resign and leave. This is why westerners like the *Bhagavad Gita*.

There are twenty-seven wells in Rameshwaram in which one bathes. It is forbidden to drink water from these wells except for well number twenty-one. What is the significance of this?

Many beliefs are local. All the wells in Rameshwaram have salt water because Rameshwaram is surrounded by the ocean on all four sides. Drinking water has to be brought from outside. In Chennai and Rameshwaram there are no freshwater wells. This is my thinking. I have not read about it and I do not know anything about the wells. One thing I can say, whether it is well number twenty-one or forty-one, none of the wells have drinking water. All the wells have salt water.

The Rameshwaram temple is right on the seashore and there is a train from Rameshwaram to Dhanushkoti. Rama crossed over to Lanka from Dhanushkoti. Now it is obliterated.

Twenty years ago, there was a storm and everything was destroyed. Dhanushkoti is where the Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea meet. The steamer for Sri Lanka leaves from this place. It is called Tallaiya Pier.

Rameshwaram is surrounded by the sea on all four sides, therefore the water in the wells is salty. As far as taking a dip in the wells is concerned, many customs are based on local beliefs just like the belief that you should visit a Ganesha temple before entering any other temple, or the belief that you must wash your feet at a particular spot after visiting the temple. These restrictions are due to some local factors. I call this superstition. They are based on local conditions, beliefs and interest. Local self-interest is a factor. If everybody patronizes just one temple then the donations and gifts to the other temples will suffer. If all the people from Orissa visit only the Jagannath Puri temple, then who will visit the Baidyanath temple? That is why they say that Baba Baidyanath is the civil court and Vasukinath is the criminal court. This is called local self-interest.

There could be other local reasons. When you visit Shirdi's Sai Baba, you have to visit Dwarika Mai's tomb. Whether you are a Hindu or a Catholic, you have to visit the tomb. Why? There is a reason. Sai Baba was a Muslim, yet he somehow happened to reach Shirdi. A brahmin family welcomed him and made arrangements for him to stay. The people of the village started benefiting from his presence, as he was an enlightened soul. He had followers who were sweepers, brahmins, and others. Everybody started looking after him. He used to do namaz everywhere except in the mosque. When he died, they made a tomb close by and now thousands visit the Sai Baba tomb.

All the films made in Bombay have their *muhurat*, the first auspicious shot, taken in Shirdi. There is not a single film that does not have its muhurat shot there. Whenever you go there you will find actors and producers and bigwigs. Go from here towards Mumbai. Take a train from Bhusawal to Ahmednagar and there you will find a little place called Shirdi. A great

soul lived there about a hundred and twenty five years ago, a Muslim fakir. He somehow wandered in there. He had a special gift. Somebody would go up to him and say, “Baba I have this difficulty.” “It will be all right” he would reply, and the difficulty would vanish. His stories are famous all over the world. Once he was sitting in front of a fire, and suddenly he started putting water in the fire. Someone asked him what he was doing and he replied that a house was on fire and he was putting it out. There are many such incredible incidents about him.

Local situations dictate a particular type of conduct. In Ujjain, there is the Mahakaleshwar temple where Indra was cured of leprosy. In Mahakaleshwar, in the Bhairava temple, you have to offer alcohol to the deity. This is where Bhairava is worshipped; without alcohol the pooja is not complete. The person I had gone with was a staunch Vaishnava and he was adverse even to the word ‘alcohol’. I said, “All right, you don’t go, I will.” I offered a bottle, no problem. The idea was to have darshan and seeing as I was already there, I might as well offer the bottle to God. They say without that, your wish remains unfulfilled. Shiva does not answer your prayers if you do not make an offering. Just as in any official government document you have a five or ten rupee stamp paper, in the same way you have to give the drink. Bhairava drank it, too. He drank the whole bottle. Not just mine, but the offerings of all the people who were there. He drank everybody’s offering. Two hundred years ago, during the British rule, they said, “There has to be a tube or a pipe behind the idol.” They dug thoroughly and could not find anything. Beyond the throat, there is no opening or passage. Beyond the slight opening of the mouth, there is stone, so where does all the alcohol go?

In Mahakaleshwar, the *abhisheka* or consecration is done with the ashes of the dead. The ashes are collected from the cremation ground in that area. Some people apply them on their forehead. Even there it is said you should bathe in this particular place or in that particular place. In Rameshwaram, there is a Shivalingam known as Balukalingam. It is made of

sandstone. It is not a Narmadeshwar lingam. Rama had laid the foundation for a Shivalingam that was made of sandstone. What we see today was made much later and people worship that. Today people make Shivalingams of gold and crystal.

It is said that the crystal lingam was established by Adiguru Shankaracharya?

It is possible. However, the interesting thing is that crystal is not found in India. Crystal is found in mountain ranges that are millions of years old. Crystal is not glass; it is the oldest rock. What we see around us are mountain ranges that are five to ten thousand years old. Crystal can only be found in mountains that are thousands and millions of years old. These ranges are in the extreme north, in countries like Holland, Norway, Siberia. All these northern ranges are extremely old. It is from these ranges that you get various kinds of crystals. The light of the sun is split into the seven colours of the rainbow when it passes through crystal. If a crystal is hung here in Ananda Kutir, we will see all the seven colours of light coming out of it when the sun's rays fall on it. These big and small crystals are found in the womb of every ancient mountain. It is not an ordinary thing. What you get in the market is glass. Crystal looks a lot like glass. To distinguish it from glass, put it in a corner and observe the seven colours of the rainbow coming out of it. That is its trademark.

What we call a crystal lingam is called a crystal ball in English. People who practise clairvoyance in the West keep this crystal ball, look into it and predict the future. Just as you have beliefs, the whole world has beliefs. Just as you are superstitious, the whole world is superstitious. To believe is a natural human trait. This has nothing to do with the level of education. Interest, enthusiasm, wealth, poverty, good behaviour and bad behaviour have nothing to do with it. Trust, hope, superstition, belief and faith, all this is inside man. Nobody can remove this. Gypsies keep a crystal ball, too. It is part of their tradition. I had one too, but I gave mine away.

Is it excavated or does it just come out?

It can surface by itself and it can also be excavated. Wealthy people use crystal as decoration and hang pieces up in the room and you can see different colours radiating from them; it looks beautiful. When they mine crystal, they remove the little pieces and these are sold to scientists. The tinier pieces are used as crystal dials to transmit radio waves in transistors from one city to another. The sounds are transmitted through these crystal dials. Today, they have started manufacturing synthetic crystals.

The specialty of the crystal is that it catches the sound waves and then reflects them. I am speaking right now, sounds are coming out of my mouth. These sounds are striking against this aluminium pipe, the glass, the marble and you. However, you cannot absorb these sounds. They are being reflected off you. Scientists believe that sound travels to an object and then is reflected back, whereas a crystal is able to absorb the sound and retain it within, and this crystal is kept in our temples.

We were discussing the crystal Shivalingam in Rameshwaram. There are many crystal Shivalingams and they are worshipped. There is a certain significance to a crystal Shivalingam. The tantric relevance is kept secret. That is why sorcerers, tantrics, and such people, wherever in the world they may be, America, Japan or Europe, all keep crystals. They worship the crystal ball every day. Very often what you see is a fake; it is made of glass. However, crystal is the real thing. It is natural and rare. It is formed after tens of billions of years. It is the essence of the mountains. This is what the tantrics keep them. Shivalingams are made of crystal also and they are highly revered, just like in Rameshwaram.

Is there one in Deoghar?

No. This Shivalingam has come from Kailash. It is believed that the two main origins of the Shivalingams are the Narmada and Gomati rivers. Everybody has their own set of beliefs. Some have faith in Vishnu, some in Shiva, some

believe in Christ and become Christians. Those who believe in Vishnu become Vaishnavites. Those who believe in Shiva become Shaivaites. Some believe in Devi and become Shakti followers. These are different ways to reach God. It is your preference; choose the one you like.

Do we get precious stones from the bottom of the ocean?

Yes. Precious stones can be obtained from the ocean. The same principle applies; they should be from an ancient mountain range, wherever the range may be.

There are three types of Shivalingams. The first is called Gomateshwara, originating from the Gomati river; the second is called Narmadeshwara, originating from the Narmada river; the third is called jyotirlingam. A *jyotirlingam* is one that has manifested where you worship it; it has not been brought there from somewhere else. For example, you might dig the ground here and a Shivalingam emerges. It will be established in the same place. It will not be moved. If somebody wishes to build a temple, it will be built around it. There are many temples where Shivalingams have been brought from outside. However, there are twelve temples where Shivalingams manifested at that very place. They are called the *dwadasha* or the twelve jyotirlingams. They are at Rameshwaram, Somnath, Mahakaleshwar, Bhimashankar, Kashi Vishwanath, Tryambakeshwar, Kedarnath, Ghushmeshwar, Baidyanath, Nageshwar, Omkareshwar and Mallikarjuna. These are the twelve Shivalingams that were established where they were found. At all other temples, no matter how large or important, Shivalingams were brought from elsewhere.

The question is not which of these is more important. It does not matter in which form you worship God; what is important is the faith and belief. If there is no faith and belief, then it is only stone. There is nothing without faith and belief. A person has faith as long as his heart is pure, he is honest and transparent, he does not lie, and is simple. Don't children say, "Papa says to tell you 'Papa is not at home'"? This is being as innocent as a child. The innocence of a child is faith. The

intellect, and by intellect I mean the mind, can think about God, it can write about God, but it cannot know God.

God has no connection with the mind. All great saints have said this. If you want to experience God in any way, then leave your mind in another room and come. Mind means thoughts. 'Why', 'how', 'good', 'bad', the mind dwells on all this. The words I am speaking are the mind. They are the domain of the mind. You cannot reach God through this. To reach God, to have the darshan of God, to receive the blessings of God, you have to be simple, like a little child. Do not think, 'I am a sinner, I am this, I am that.' Whether a person is of a good character or a bad character, a sinner or a saint, is irrelevant. God says, "Those who come to me simply, without cunning, I show myself to them." That is why one should not try to analyze the worship being performed for God.

Whether Rameshwaram has a crystal Shivalingam or a jyotirlingam or a Narmadeshwara lingam, these are all useless discussions. The smallest stone can be God. You can see God in any form. You can see God as a Shivalingam, as a shaligram, and you can even see God in the form of a goat! You require just one qualification for that, innocence. When you are different internally and externally, when you pretend to be something you are not, that is cunning. Not only God, even we dislike cunning. If your servants, wife or children say one thing and do another, it bothers you, doesn't it? Then how will God like it?

You have to open your heart to God. So what if you are a thief? So what if you are a prostitute? What difference does it make? The title has been given to you by society. The brahmin got his position from society. God did not make him a brahmin. Who gave you the stamp of a caste? Did God make you an ironmonger? Did he make you a carpenter? We have created all this. Before God we are all lost souls. When you go before God, completely forget that you are a good-for-nothing. Only remember this: God will surely answer your prayers. Why wouldn't He listen? You are listening, right? When you say something, you hear what you say. When you

are listening, that is when He is listening. He is you. You are the one who is praying and you are the one who is listening to the prayers. When you listen, God is listening.

All the same, the mind keeps on questioning, “Did Ganesha drink the milk or not?” I do not know whether Ganesha drank the milk, though I do know that in Ujjain I fed a bottle of brandy to Bhairava in the temple and he drank it all. *Tu kehta kagaz ki lekhi, mein kehta ankhon ki dekhi* – “You are talking about what you have read, I am telling you what I saw.” I know that when I was making him drink the brandy, it was not falling anywhere else. I had read that in the time of the British, there was an investigation; they dug under the idol and found nothing. The idol’s mouth has an opening only until the palate; beyond that there is no passage. Then where does it go? People are making him drink all day long. People go there specifically to make him drink. That is the speciality of Mahakaal Bhairava; give him the drink and perform *abhisheka*, consecration, with the ashes from the funeral pyres.

Did you feed him with your hands?

Yes. I put the bottle to his mouth and he drank it. That’s it. All done. Why not? If you can feed your child milk with your hands, then why not feed God with your hands? It feels good. You do not get the feeling that a priest or a spirit is around.

The Mahakaleshwar jyotirlingam is in Ujjain. It used to be called Ujjaini. There is a story in the ‘Uttarakanda’ of the *Ramacharitamanas* about a brahmin child who took birth in Ujjaini. Guru Sandeepani belonged to this place. Sandeepani was a renowned brahmin from Varanasi; however, for some reason he was unable to see eye to eye with the other brahmins and teachers there, so he left Varanasi and went to Ujjaini. This is where he taught Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna’s guru was Sandeepani. Sri Krishna went from Mathura and Vrindavan to Ujjaini, and that is where he received his education.

Every twelve years a Mahakumbha Mela is held there. Kumbha Melas are held in Haridwar, Prayag and Tryambakeshwar. Every twelve years, when the sun is in a particular

alignment with the stars, there is a Kumbha Mela. Each city's celebration dates are calculated in advance according to a special positioning of the sun in the zodiac. It is said that when this happens, the water in that place becomes like nectar.

Let me tell you a little bit about the Kumbha Mela. It is colossal, beyond imagination. Hundreds of thousands of people gather there: people in black, people with flags, people who are naked, meat eaters, bidi smokers, people belonging to every cult and sect. There are three types of sannyasins: sannyasins, udasis and vairagis. Vairagis wear white clothes, udasis wear black clothes and sannyasins wear *geru*. Hundreds of thousands of people come to participate in this event. People from every community, every religion and every language attend. Gujarati sadhus, Marathi sadhus, Bengali sadhus, Punjabi sadhus, Madrasis sadhus, all the sadhus come. There are all sorts of people: those who eat just once a day, those who eat only fruit, those who smoke *ganja*, marijuana, and those who drink alcohol, all kinds of people visit. Satsang goes on day and night.

In the Niranjani Akhara, to which we belong, many well-educated people come to take sannyasa. The Puri Shankaracharya was the principal of the Sanskrit college. The faithful come from different villages; a minimum of forty to fifty million people visit the Mela. They bathe in the confluence of the three rivers, the Ganga, the Yamuna and the Saraswati.

If you get an opportunity, do go and visit and you will know what the Kumbha Mela is all about. Without going there, you will not be able to understand it. It feels as though the whole of India is huddled in a single place. The government makes all the necessary arrangements. Security officers are on duty. Special trains are added to increase the carrying capacity. Important people attend. People who are fabulously rich attend.

During the mela, a new spiritual head or *acharya* is elected at the different akharas. Each group elects a new head and announces the name of the acharya who will henceforth be responsible for the running of the akhara. The result is formally given to the government. Thereafter, the logistics are

then decided upon, such as who will be the first flag bearer: the Juna akhara, the Niranjani akhara or the Mahanirvani akhara. There is a line-up and the order is decided beforehand. Each akhara marches with its accompaniment of a band, horses, elephants, pandits, trident holders, mantra chanters and kirtan singers. First the sadhus bathe and then everybody else. It is very peculiar.

The largest Kumbha Mela is held in Haridwar or Prayag. If you want to see the Kumbha Mela, see the one at Haridwar. However, it is extremely difficult. Go along with a sadhu, or you will find it very difficult. It is overcrowded. It feels as though everyone has gone crazy. You forget whether you have eaten, whether you are tired or whether you have slept. If you feel hungry, walk into any tent and you are sure to be fed. There is no simple food, only puris, malpuas, halva, all the Indian delicacies and sweets. Everybody feeds everybody, everybody is generous. When I went there, I sat down in one place and people kept giving me money! I was not even asking. Swami Satsangi and Swami Niranjan had gone somewhere and I was sitting there to drink a cup of tea, and people kept offering money. I said, "I don't want money, brother."

There is a sect called the Nagas. They are completely naked. They eat there, perform their ablutions there and sleep there, and people come and take the soil and apply it on their foreheads. People have amazing faith. Those troubled by skin disease, cancer or any other ailment come there with the hope that they will be cured. The Nagas are very uncouth; they are not gentlemen. They will shout abusively, "Hey, you goddamned fellow, get out of here!" They do not speak the language of cultured people. They will say, "Is this your father's house? Why are you sitting here? Move away from here!" They speak like louts, but still people go to them. People from all over the world have faith in them. Catholics go there, Buddhists go there, Jains go there, wealthy people go there, all kinds of people go there.

When the sun is in a specific position so that it is in alignment with the zodiac sign of *Kumbha*, Aquarius, the



Kumbha Mela takes place. It is said that when Garuda was escaping with the pot of nectar, he was being chased by demons. While running, he spilt some of the nectar in four places and these are the four places where the Kumbha Mela is held. People go there to resolve their problems and have their wishes fulfilled. It is an occasion when you can have darshan of saints from every cult and sect from all over India, from the most traditional to the most modern. Every saint and sadhu from the top of the Himalayas to the tip of Kanyakumari goes there. The government makes all the arrangements and shopkeepers gather to sell their wares.

I have seen two big Kumbha Melas, one in Haridwar and one in Prayag. Now I do not have the courage to go again. It is very difficult. Imagine thirty to forty million people all in one small area; there are unimaginable difficulties. In the Kumbha Mela, VIPs and ministers are not allowed. If they come, they have to come incognito. They cannot come with their flagged cars and entourage. There is a law against it. Once Jawaharlal Nehru attended and there was a stampede in which many people were killed. Since then there has been a law put in place that whoever visits will go there as an ordinary person. They cannot go as chief ministers or presidents or heads of state. The government has nothing to do with it and rightly so; after all, what is the point of these positions in a holy place?

Did the Kumbha Mela take place in the times of the British and the Mughals?

The Kumbha Mela is very ancient, dating back to the time of Raja Harshvardhan. No matter what we say about the British, one thing is for certain; they never interfered with religion. Among the Mughals, there was no interference in the reign of Shah Jehan and Jehangir, but in the time of Aurangzeb the interference began because he wanted to establish himself. Humayun was, of course, too weak. Akbar was tolerant and allowed everybody in his palace.

Why? Was it because of Jodhabai?

Yes. That is one of the reasons. However, every individual has his own set of beliefs. In the time of Akbar, Ramnavami was celebrated, all the festivals were celebrated, and all the people participated. Tulsidas, Mira and Ramdas were born during the reign of Akbar. Poets and poetry flourished and this is only possible in a society where religion is not suppressed. In Akbar's time there was freedom, so people expressed themselves freely, and this is the reason why Tulsidas and Mira were able to express themselves. There is record of an instance where Akbar himself went for Mirabai's satsang.

In the same manner, during the British rule the Kumbha Mela still took place. The Kumbha Mela is very old, it dates back to the time of Raja Harshvardhan who went to the Kumbha Mela and donated all his personal wealth; not the state treasury, but his personal wealth. He used to sleep on the floor on a simple sheet and he and his queen ate from leaf plates and earthen pots. It is recorded in history. Chinese visitors to his court have written about it. At that time there was a very close relationship between India and China. There were many travellers, like Fa-hien and Hieun Tsang, from China. The Kumbha Mela took place in the time of Buddha, too. Now, since so many people visit, there are trains, shops, hospitals and all kinds of arrangements. In the past, fewer people attended.

Lord Buddha lived 2,510 years ago. After that, in Ashoka's reign, Kalinga was attacked and he embraced Buddhism. Ashoka's held his reign 1,800 years ago. The Kumbha Mela's history is not recent, it is very old; it is described in the Vedas. The Vedas were written before Buddha's time; they are not in Pali or Sanskrit. The Sanskrit of the Vedas is a little different from the Sanskrit we study today. The grammar is different. The Vedas were written before Buddha. In Buddha's time the language was more colloquial, it was Pali. Buddha used to speak Pali. Jains also spoke in Pali. All their texts are in Pali and not Sanskrit. The Nalanda University also taught in Pali. Many sub-dialects, such as Bhojpuri, Avadhi, Maithili, etc., emerged from it.

There is a beautiful description of the Kumbha Mela in the Vedas. There is also a description of River Saraswati. In those days, the Saraswati used to flow overland. Today it is not visible; you can only see the two rivers, Ganga and Yamuna. The flow of Saraswati is now hidden. In the vedic times, Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati all flowed. Now Saraswati has gone underground. Prayag is situated at the confluence of the three rivers and it is also called Triveni, which means three flows.

Prayag is the king of all pilgrimages. Many yajnas have taken place there. More recently, the Muslims have given it the name Allahabad. In the word prayag, *yag* means yajna.

Whenever people want to perform a *yajna* or sacrificial rite, they do it at the confluence of rivers in a place like Karnaprayag, Rudraprayag, Devprayag, Sonprayag, and so on. Karnaprayag is on the way to Kedarnath. Devprayag is close to Rishikesh. Every prayag is at a confluence of rivers. In the ancient times, yajnas were performed where the rivers met, that is why these places came to be known as ‘prayag’.

Why did the Saraswati disappear? Was it due to some geographical reason, or was it something else?

It is certain that the Saraswati has disappeared. From satellite pictures, we can clearly see the path of its flow. Rivers disappear for many reasons. One is the continuous deposition of silt. Silt does not hold water and as silt builds up, water starts to disappear. There was a river in Gaya; you cannot see anything of it now, yet if you dig you get water immediately. Has the water level has gone down or has the sand built up? The rivers continuously carry silt down from the mountains and deposit it in the plains. The silt comes from the mountains. Dust from space also settles on earth. Scientists say that, for this reason, the diameter of the earth is increasing by one centimetre every year.

The other river is the Ganga. The Ganga’s silt is like clay; it flows easily and gets deposited on the banks. If the silt did not flow easily, the same thing would have happened to the Ganga. The third river, the Yamuna, is dark; not only here, but also at the source. Go from here to Dehradun and from there to Mussoorie, and then travel down the mountains there. From a distance, you can tell the Yamuna. It is exactly the colour of a blue sky. You recognize it as soon as you see it. When Bharata saw the Yamuna he had tears in his eyes, for blue is the colour of God. It has to be, because God is infinite. The one who is free from the three gunas, his colour has to be blue. What colour would infinity be? Blue. What is the colour of the sky? Blue. Why? There is nothing there. There are no walls. It is empty. There is only space; therefore, the sky is blue in colour.

Satsang 3

12 September 1997



Swamiji, in your sannyasa life did you ever face impossible situations or difficulties?

My sannyasa happened by chance. All the people with me took sannyasa on the 8th of September. I took mine on the 12th. I had refused to take sannyasa. However, today I celebrate fifty years of my sannyasa. Sannyasa is very hard. Even today there are difficulties. If you get bitten by a mosquito, aren't you troubled?

Our childhood decides our adult life, and as a child I was raised on a farm. We were wealthy farmers, though we stayed in a simple mud home, without light and without windows; that was our lifestyle. There were bugs in our beds and the

women of the house had lice in their hair. I am from Almora. The district of Almora is at a height of 18,000 feet. We used to wash our clothes twice a year and bathe once a year. If anyone bathed every day in Almora, he'd be sure to get pneumonia! It was difficult, as Almora is a very cold place. The house was warm, but it would be bitterly cold outside. We used to carry a tiny lantern and go outdoors in the cold to answer the call of nature. The skin on the servants' hands was always chapped from the cold. Walking barefoot on stone in the cold gave blisters.

After that, what conveniences did we have in Sivananda ashram? Nothing: swarms of mosquitoes and no mosquito nets. We never used mosquito nets. There were scorpions and monkeys all over the place, and our clothes were in tatters. It was a very primitive life. The Ganga water was murky and muddy. We would drink it and get diarrhoea. It was very hard, but no matter what, that was a lifestyle, too. When people from England or America go on explorations and expeditions, they also have to undergo terrible hardships; however, they take it as a challenge. Life is a challenge. I have also experienced hardship, but I have never felt unhappy. I have never felt distress or experienced disease. I have never given my heart to anybody. If somebody comes it is okay, and if somebody goes that is also okay. What reason is there to like someone and dislike someone? All that does not work for me. That is my nature, which I have also worked on. Whatever your disposition was in your previous birth, you will express that same nature in this birth. You will only find rice in the paddy field; you won't find wheat there. I have brought my own karmas, my own samskaras and my own swabhava. I will have no difficulty in leaving this place. "Who will run the place? How will the place be run?" I am not worried by these questions.

Have you ever had an emotional problem?

No. I have not had an emotional problem. I do not understand all those emotions of love and so on, expressed in poems. In the movies, a boy and a girl fall in love. In separation the girl

is miserable and the boy grows a beard; I do not understand how all that happens.

Present social condition

If you have a positive mind, that represents *Satya Yuga*, the era of truth and purity, and if you have a negative mind, that represents *Kali Yuga*, the era of darkness, the current era. Do not think that the world is a very bad place today. Thieving and plundering took place even in *Treta Yuga*, the second of the four eras in Hindu mythology, the silver age after Satya Yuga. Sri Rama's wife was kidnapped. In the era of the *Mahabharata*, Pootna used to devour men. Hidimba and Hidimbaa also devoured men. In every era, the three gunas, sattwaguna, rajoguna and tamoguna prevail. Therefore, to say that these are bad times is wrong.

When the situations are unfavourable, even the most resolute people are shaken. Dronacharya's resolve was shaken when Ashwathama asked for milk. Dronacharya was poor; and when his son Ashwathama asked for milk, which he could not afford, he crushed rice, added water and tried to give that to the boy. When Ashwathama refused to drink it, Dronacharya was deeply affected. Insulted by Raja Drupada, Dronacharya came to teach the use of weapons to the Kaurava court. He was forced into this situation. If somebody is compelled to do something because of the situation he is in, it does not mean he is a bad person.

To improve the present situation, first of all, improve the lot of women. I am telling you this as a mantra. Until and unless the women in your society become competent and strong, you will never have real wealth; you will always be a pauper. An individual has two legs; if one leg does not work, then he will limp. Similarly, the husband and wife are like the two legs of the family; if one is weak, how will the household and family life work?

The woman should be capable and know everything: how to pay the telephone bill, the electricity bill, the income tax, how to deal with legal matters, talk to the lawyer, talk to

the collector. She should have knowledge of all these things. She also lives in this world. Her requirements do not end with kitchen utensils. In a civilized and prosperous society, the women do not spend their time in the kitchen. Look at the developed, rich countries; who are the chefs there? Are they women? No. The well known chefs who prepare food for important people are usually men. Yes, the women look after the home and make sure the servants are doing their job. Affluent society, civilized society, educated society, cultured society: these are simply synonyms.

Girls must be educated, and educated in co-educational schools, so that from childhood they know how to behave with boys, how to talk to boys and the situations they might have to face. This should happen by the time they are seven to eight years old. You must educate the children and from a young age you must teach them the *Ramacharitamanas*. I am speaking of North India. In the South, they teach the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The *Ramacharitamanas* is an excellent text. It should be taught from childhood. In all households, the recitation or *path* of the *Ramacharitamanas* should be organized and all the members of the family should sit and listen to it. If you alone read it, it is not going to be beneficial. Make sure your spouse and your children all get to listen. If you have a daughter-in-law, make sure she hears it. All day long you have negative thoughts; if you invest five minutes in God, how can it harm you? The whole essence of spiritual life lies in devotion to God.

Ritual sacrifice of animals and performance of poojas to awaken the gods and goddesses has its own place, but that is not spirituality. It is superstition. If you like, you can do it. It is your wish and I will not stop you. However, the meaning of *bhakti*, devotion or spirituality, is to love God, to have a relationship with Him.

Pranayama

Every child should do some yoga practice upon waking up in the morning. After a bath, he or she should sit cross-legged

or in the lotus posture and practise pranayama. As you grow older, the pipe connecting the nasal passage to the lungs gradually becomes narrower. The passages of those who smoke and those who work in polluted areas are even more affected. That is why these people often have difficulty breathing and they cannot climb. The passages become so narrow that the air traffic does not flow smoothly. By air traffic, I mean oxygen. If your lungs are flooded with oxygen, then you can climb a mountain regardless of your age. Look at the mahatmas; at the age of seventy to eighty, they climb such high mountains. How? They are capable of this because when one practises pranayama, the breathing passages remain young and healthy. It takes just five minutes, and an illness can take you down for ten days. However, people will suffer the ten days of sickness, and still they will not do five minutes of pranayama!

Mantra for Kali Yuga

Every individual should spare a thought for others. If you are concerned about those who are not related to you, not by family, community or blood, then you have taken a step in the direction of spirituality. Everybody is concerned about their spouse, children, relatives and friends. This is totally normal and natural. It is not something you need to learn. However, it is very difficult to be concerned about other people. Listen carefully to what I am saying.

Every animal in the world wants love: dogs, cows, sheep, parrots, they all want love. The dog wants affection; stroke its head and it likes it so much. Many people are not getting this love. Some of them have been thrown out of their homes, some have lost all their loved ones and nobody is prepared to even give them food. People who are willing to give five hundred litres of milk to Shiva will not give even one litre to a needy person. You spend fifty to one hundred rupees on sacrificing a goat, but you do not think that if you feed ten widows this amount your son will be healed. I am not criticizing gods and goddesses; I, too, follow the tradition. I also respect the deities. However, people will follow superstitions, but they

will not believe that if they feed four hungry souls, their son will get better.

Mother Teresa, who recently passed away, was not an Indian. She was from Albania. She left for Northern Ireland and became a nun. In the Indian context, she became a sannyasin. There were riots going on and yet she went there. I was also there, and I met her at that time. She then came to India and went to Kolkata. She had only one mission. She would pick up orphans from the streets, bathe them, dress their wounds and feed them. People used to mock her and say she was a Catholic and that she was spreading Christianity. However, fourteen and fifteen year old girls saw the work she was doing and decided to join her. By joining her, I do not mean they took sannyasa; they started going there every day. I have known people from very wealthy families who would drive to her centre in their cars and distribute one or two thousand blankets.

Mother Teresa took everyone under her wing. She received ill-treatment also. However, she just said one thing: “One who has a husband receives love from him, one who has a wife receives love from her; if not a lot, at least a bit. One who has a mother enjoys a mother’s love. One who has a child enjoys a son’s or daughter’s love. Brothers and sisters enjoy each other’s love. One way or another, most people are loved. They do not need me. However, there are some poor, unfortunate souls who receive love from nobody. There is nobody who cares to know whether they are alive or dead. Instead people look in their direction and spit.”

*Sai sab sansar mein matlab ka vyavahaar;
Jab tak paisa paas mein tab tak tako yaar.*

Sai, all the equations of this world are based on need.
As long as you have money, you will have friends.

This is the way of the world, and if there is somebody who can love these unfortunate people, then that person becomes a reflection of God. Sri Rama left Ayodhya, crossed the Tamasa River and reached Shringaberpur. The only person he found

worthy was Nishadraj. He found no true devotee other than Shabari.

God has said, "Just as I have loved you, in the same way, you must love others." Once somebody said to me, "Swamiji, you gave so and so a gift, and he went and sold it in the market." I replied, "He got money for what he sold, right? It did not go in vain. If he got money for it, then it served some purpose." Suppose I gave you a bull and you went and sold it in the market. I bought it for three to four thousand rupees and you sold it for a hundred rupees. You received some benefit out of it. The mission is accomplished. The main point is that you received some benefit. I will not think, 'I tried to help you, but you betrayed me.' A sadhu does not think like that and nor does God.

God has blessed you with many things. Haven't you abused what you were given? Haven't you cheated God? God has gifted you so generously. A good wife, good children, a good house, good servants, yet you have misused everything. Still, God is not upset. He thinks, 'Never mind, at least some good came of it.' This is my thinking also. It is my job, your job and everybody's job to find people who are helpless. Find those who have no support. Find those whose only hope is God. God loves you without any motive, without any selfish purpose. God is the image of love. To love is His weakness, it is His nature. He does not punish anybody. Man's deeds themselves serve as punishment. If you consume poison, you will die; if you drink milk, you will become fat; if you have neem, you will find it bitter; if you have a rasagulla, you will find it sweet; why do you bring God into all this?

Mother Teresa received so much respect. People practically worshipped her. In Kolkata, Hindus, Muslims, the lame, the handicapped, lepers, thugs, thieves and prostitutes, they were all carrying flowers and garlands to offer to her as a mark of respect and love on her final journey. The Pope sent his representative. It was unprecedented. Never before had the Pope sent his representative upon the passing away of a nun, but it was done for Mother Teresa and she was given

the funeral rites befitting a head of the Catholic tradition. All the rites were conducted by the Pope's representative. This was the first such occurrence in the world such was the level of respect she commanded. Other than Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi, nobody in India has been carried on a cannon car for their final journey. She was a saint; she had extraordinary qualities. The complete organization of her funeral was looked after by the army.

The respect is one thing, but the important point is her sadhana. She believed that God is the image of love, and whenever we embrace a dying man, a diseased person, an orphan, or a miserable soul, that is the worship of God. There are many ways to worship God. You can go to a temple and offer bael leaves and tulsi leaves; this is considered one form of pooja. Ringing the bell and blowing the conch is also pooja. Pilgrimage and fasting are also forms of worship. However, in today's times, in Kali Yuga, the ultimate pooja is to do good for others. It is mentioned in the 'Uttarakanda' of the *Ramacharitamanas* that in Kali Yuga, only two things are significant for the liberation of humanity; the first is to repeat the name of the Lord and the second is doing good for others. The eras of Satya, Treta and Dwapara had different mandates. In Satya Yuga it was to perform yajnas, in Treta it was penance, in Dwapara it was yoga, and in Kali Yuga it is the name of the Lord. The basis of the *Ramacharitamanas* is the name of the Lord and nothing else.

Teach the children the name of the Lord and the virtue of faith. Superstitious rites do not constitute true faith. "I am a householder, I repeat the name of the Lord, I look after my family, educate my children and also spend some time working for others." This is sattvic faith.

From the next year on, this is what I am going to do. I am going to seek out those women who have been abandoned by their sons and daughters-in-law, those older people begging on the streets, those who are forced to wash utensils in people's homes. I am going to adopt them in the ashram. I will call them at eight in the morning and I will pay them three rupees

per hour. For each hour they spend here, I will pay them accordingly and immediately. They do not have to perform any work. If they are illiterate, they have to take the name of the Lord: *Hare Rama hare Rama Rama Rama hare hare; Hare Krishna hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna hare hare*. That is all they have to do. If they have some education then they will have to read the *Ramacharitamanas*. I will find very few old women who have studied up to high school, nevertheless I will tell them to write, “Sri Rama Sri Rama” in notebooks. In this way, I will have many notebooks. When the new building is being constructed, I will place these notebooks in the foundation. The building will be constructed on the name of the Lord!

You people are all healthy and hearty, but there are lots of people in our society who are helpless. Some are begging, some are earning only fifty to one hundred rupees per month as wages, some are forced to sleep on the verandas of homes. I have a budget for one hundred people next year. I will pay them daily wages according to government rules, thirty to forty rupees, whatever it may be. If the government says to pay more, I will pay more. That is not a problem. As long as I have the money, I will give it.

Goodness is still respected in this world. From the President and the religious leaders to the poor and the wealthy, everybody is touched by someone who tries to help. It is simple: a person who is good is human, and a person who is bad is the devil, no matter which caste or creed or religion he comes from.

We speak of our family responsibilities, but we do not speak of our social responsibilities. It is called a debt. It is said by our ancestors that we have five debts: *deva rina*, *rishi rina*, *pitri rina*, *bhoota rina* and *manushya rina*. *Deva rina* or the debt to God, is paid back by *yajna* and worship. Rishis Vasishta, Vyasa, Vishwamitra and others have written many books. Nobody reads them any more, but I have read them. The debt to the rishis is cleared by study. I have cleared my debt. That is why you should read a lot. Read in your free time. Read day and night. We have four Vedas, six shastras,

eighteen Puranas, and many other texts. The Indian literature is vast; it comes second only to English. English literature is very vast. No other literature comes even close; it is the largest in the world. Next in place is Sanskrit. Sanskrit has a book on every subject, from religion to sex, but who reads them now? Yes, we used to read them, but our time is gone, and now no one reads them any more.

Manushya rina is the social debt. You have not yet cleared your debt to society, but I am clearing it. This is important work. This is necessary not only in Rikhia, but everywhere else also. It is necessary to have people with this kind of thinking everywhere. After the age of fifty, everybody should retire. Our texts speak of *vanaprastha ashrama*, the period of retirement after fifty. And after the age of seventy-five, you must leave your children and families, leave everything, and go live in a small hut or cabin and use the money that you have saved to work for the poor. Do not think, ‘I do not have enough money, how can I help others?’ As I said before, there is no shortage of good people in this world.

Do you know that in Rikhia at the time of the bride’s final farewell from her father’s house, we used to distribute clothes and jewellery? All the arrangements were made by Swami Satsangi. I once saw a suitcase in the hall and I said, “This must be worth a minimum of thirty thousand rupees!” She asked, “What should I do?” I replied, “Give it. If it was your daughter, wouldn’t you give it?” That suitcase had been sent by someone, I hadn’t earned that money. One person from Kolkata prepared one hundred and fifty suitcases like that and sent them, full of saris, bangles, sandals, sindoor, bindis, watches, and so on, to the extent that they even packed sanitary napkins and things needed in the future for the health of the unborn child! At the time of her last farewell from the father’s home, everybody wishes to give good things to the bride. When a person thinks about other people, then other people also think about him. Such a person is called a sadhu or a saint.

Satsang 4

13 September 1997



Role of poverty in spiritual life

In Thailand, anybody who follows Buddhism has to wear geru, sleep on a mat, beg for alms, shave their head and live in a monastery for a certain period. He may be a king or a servant; nobody is exempted. What is the use of such a system? Even I have begged for alms, but I never felt the need to beg. Then why did I do so? I did not have any requirements or needs. If I had a wife and family I would have begged for them, but I don't, so why did I beg? I could get two rotis, a minimal meal, easily. In Varanasi, nobody dies hungry. Just sit anywhere and you will be fed. In Varanasi, there are many

anna kshetras, food houses. Go to any one of them and you will certainly get dal and roti.

Even so, for about four to five years I was seeking alms. Why did I do this? It is essential for mental growth and mental health. Whatever I have received in my life, the credit for that goes to things like these, begging for alms, living in dharamshalas, spending the night under a banyan tree, sleeping on somebody's veranda, all these things have a profound impact on the mental state and spiritual life, and uplift them both. What the real, tangible effect of this is, I also do not understand, but this tradition exists among Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and Jains. Begging for alms and wandering like a monk is a tradition of all religions.

I wandered everywhere, from Afghanistan to Burma, and didn't have a penny in my pocket. If I got some money from somewhere, I would start out once again. On the train, I would tell the ticket collector, "I want to go to Varanasi." He would say, "Okay. Sit down anywhere." I would sit without a ticket, though not without permission. In those days we were under the British rule. In 1945, during their rule, we received a lot of cooperation. Back then it was less difficult for us sadhus; now it is very difficult.

At that time I travelled extensively; Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Tajikistan. Once I went to Assam on elephant-back. I even crossed the river on elephant-back. In Madhya Pradesh, I stayed with remote tribal people, in areas where no roads could reach; even bicycles could not reach there. Yet I would travel to such places, and stay in cowsheds. They were poor people. One gave me mouse soup, not once, but for two months. I didn't know. I was in Jagdalpur district, doing my *chaturmas*, the period of sadhana during the four months of the monsoon season. A disciple of my guru was a revenue inspector there. He dropped me at the home of an *adivasi*, tribal person, as I wanted complete solitude. I would spread a few leaves under a tree and sit there all day long. The *adivasi* had a tiny little hut and at night the whole family would sleep in a huddle and I'd sleep there with them. During the day,

he would bring me some rice and the mouse soup. At the end of two months, on the full moon, the revenue inspector came to fetch me. The adivasi brought the same food for him. He asked, "What is this?" He said, "This is mouse soup." The inspector said, "Oh my goodness! It's sacrilege." I said, "Forget it, he is a poor man." What I am trying to say is that it did not affect me at all. I thought, "It has not affected my mind in any way. I did not get sick. I do not know what people have fed me, I might have eaten anything. At least here I know what he gave me!"

A wanderer's life, poverty and begging for alms, is therapeutic. It cures diseases. Poverty is not a curse; the curse is the pain, sorrow and suffering. It is a curse when the suffering caused by poverty creates frustration; when you see your child's hungry face. When Dronacharya saw Ashwathama's face, he was shaken. When your wife makes a reproachful remark or the elders say something unpleasant, you become frustrated. If I had a wife and children, I too would be worried. There was nobody to tell me anything, and I enjoyed that.

I can see that worldly people have so much pain. Wealthy people are so unhappy, and those who do not have money want it badly! All the great people, Mahatma Gandhi, Jesus Christ, the Buddhist monks, were all poor. Look through history; there are so many examples. The great mathematician Ramanujam died of tuberculosis. One of the foremost thinkers of our time, Nietzsche, what happened to him? He was penniless. Wealth and money is the root of disease, as money brings comfort, a false sense of security and causes fear. It is said:

*Bhoge rogabhayam kule chyutibhayam vitle nripaalaad bhayam
Maane dainyabhayam bale ripubhayam roope jaraayaa bhayam;
Shaastre vaadibhayam guno khalabhayam kaaye kritaanataad bhayam
Sarva vastu bhayaanvitam bhuvi nrinaam vairaagyamevaabhayam.*

Bhoge rogabhayam – "The one who indulges will fear sickness."
Kule chyutibhayam – "If you are from an important, reputed, wealthy family, you will always fear losing your prestige."

Vitte nripaalaad bhayam – “If you have money, you will always fear the government.”

All the things in the world are, in some way or another, the cause of fear. The only people who should have money are those who are willing to spend it on others. You may have tens of millions of rupees as long as that money is for others, not for yourself.

There was a small incident in the life of Mahatma Gandhi. His wife Kasturba found four *annas* or twenty-five paise in a room in their house. In those days four annas was a lot of money, unlike today when even if you lose a hundred rupees you will not notice. Kasturba picked it up and bought toys for the grandchildren. In the evening, Gandhiji saw the toys and enquired where they had come from. Kasturba replied that she had bought them from the market. He asked her from where she had gotten the money and she said she took the money she found in the room. Gandhiji flew into a rage and said the money belonged to the institution and not to him. She said the money was given to him. Gandhiji said, “No. The money was neither for me, nor for you. Now, until you weave another dhoti, you will not change your clothes.” He punished her and also published an article in which he mentioned that his family had committed a breach of trust.

Social debt

A person who distributes a part of his wealth to his family, a part to society and a part to the deprived will not carry the burden of his wealth. Society also has a right to the money you earn, as you have earned the money through society. You cannot earn money in isolation. The society educated you. In order to educate you, it built schools, institutions, buildings, groomed teachers, made the laws and the legal system. What is society’s share for this? This is known as debt.

Everybody has a social debt; it is one of the five debts that every person has. Today, if everybody turned into thieves and dacoits, how would you earn money? If there was no security, would you be able to run the house? No. The society has given

you security. It has given you an identity. It has given you a safe place to live. Will you clear this debt or not?

You also need to clear the debt to those who have written books on geography, history, philosophy, religion, commerce, chemistry and physical sciences; clear the debt of those learned people. That is *rishi rina*, the debt to the rishis. This is the modern interpretation. If the books had not been written, there is no way you would have become a BA or an MA or an MBBS. You become a doctor by studying from books. This means that you have a debt to pay back.

Definition of a saint

There are various debts of humanity. One debt is to those who are helpless. Those who have cleared this debt are called saints. Mother Teresa has gained this stature because she uplifted those who were dying. Very few of them lived, yet she embraced those whom the world had abandoned and she achieved sainthood for that. This is not some kind of a degree. No institution offers a degree in becoming a saint. They can call you ‘Father’, they can call you an abbot, a monk, they can call you anything, but there is no degree for becoming a saint. Out of the five debts, one of them is to the helpless in society. Whoever absolves himself of this debt is a saint. He could even be a householder, it does not make any difference.

Why don’t we call Gandhiji ‘Leader Gandhi’? We don’t call him a saint either. We call him ‘Mahatma’. Just like there are the qualifications of BA, MA, MBBS and so on, in the same way, there are different titles according to the appropriate qualification: mahatma, saint, yogi, rishi, muni, sadhu, sannyasin. Narada is called a muni, never a rishi. Agastya is also called a muni. Vasishtha is called Rishi Vasishtha, not Muni Vasishtha. Rishi, muni, yogi, tapasvi: these are all qualifications. In the same way, a saint is one who has devoted and dedicated his whole life to those who have nobody. They say the same thing about God: “God is there for the one who has no one.” That is why He is also referred to as *dinanatha*,

dinabandhu, *dinadayal*: ‘protector of the poor’, ‘friend of the poor’, ‘one who shows mercy to the poor’.

If everyone who has the means follows the principle of paying their social debt, then they will not have to feel insecure about their money and money will never raise problems for them. Money creates problems when you spend it only on yourself. When you spend money only on yourself, when you indulge, that is when money becomes troublesome. I am not criticizing money; when I speak, I say balanced words. While austerity is a virtue, the misery of poverty is also extremely difficult to bear; it is a curse. Wealth is a terrible curse, yet it is also the ultimate boon.

When you repay your debt by looking after the sector of society which is handicapped, then you are a *mahapurusha*, a great man. Your personal life is of no consequence. You may be a very rich and very important person; however, what have you done for society? Nothing! Those who are good are good only for themselves. What have you done for society? What have you done for the poor? What have you done for the blind? What have you done for lepers? What have you done for the lame? You just became good! The goodness in man does not reach others until it is put to use in a concrete, practical form. The best form of goodness, or the greatest virtue, is working for the welfare of others; this is the biggest *dharma* or duty of this age. The *Ramacharitamanas*, the Vedas, the Puranas, the scriptures, the Bible, the Koran, all say that doing good for others is the biggest virtue. Tulsidas says:

*Parahita sarisa dharama nahi bhaai,
para pidaa sama nahi adhamaai*

Brother, there is no virtue like benevolence, and no meanness like oppressing others.

A man could be a drunkard, a meat-eater, a womanizer; it does not matter. The world only sees how he has improved the lives of so many, and this is what is necessary.

Satsang 5

14 September 1997



I go to school, but I have to struggle.

If you want to achieve something in life, you have to struggle. Without struggle, you cannot become great. You may become a teacher, a professor, a doctor, still that is not everything. Boys and girls both study at schools, colleges and universities. Some become professors, some doctors, some political leaders, some ministers, others collectors; however, nobody remembers them. Why? Because what you achieve without struggle does not last for long.

Mahatma Gandhi struggled so hard; all the circumstances were against him. In the same way, the Rani of Jhansi had to struggle and fight against all odds. Subhash Chandra Bose struggled; he escaped from jail, went to Germany, Russia, Japan, and started the Azad Hind Fauj or the 'Free India' Army. How did he achieve it? How did he collect the money? Did he get his three square meals a day? A struggle cannot take place in favourable conditions. Imagine you have a farm, able parents and a bike on which you go to school. When you return, your meal is ready for you. These are favourable, conducive circumstances. In such a situation, getting a BA or an MBBS degree is possible, but true progress is very difficult.

You have to struggle in adverse and difficult situations. Difficult circumstances are those times when you have to cycle seven to eight kilometres to get anywhere, food is difficult to get, parents are sick, there is no money; these are difficult situations. Lal Bahadur Shastri, one of the prime ministers of India, had to cross the river to go to school, not by boat, but by swimming. To get on the boat he would have had to pay a few paise, which he did not have. It was a small river and in the monsoon it would swell. He would tie his bundle of books on his head and cross over, swimming. In such conditions, God helps the person from within. There are many such stories. There have been many great people in the world and they all have struggled and risen above difficult situations.

Swami Vivekananda rose to such heights under very difficult circumstances and passed away at the age of thirty-eight. There were times when, as a sannyasin, he did not even get food. Once a monkey stole his underwear. When he reached America, nobody was there to receive him. He had to sleep in a large water pipe. Whomever he went to, they would not even open the door to him. He had so many difficulties, yet today the whole world respects him.

Mother Teresa was a history lecturer at a convent. She opened a school and hospital in a slum area. People used to ridicule her, saying she was simply putting on an act. This was fifty years ago. Today, the whole of India remembers her.

The wife of the President of the United States has come for her funeral; many important people from all over the world have come. Remember, if you want to achieve something in this life, do not seek the easy way. The man who does not climb mountains does not become strong. Education is a good thing. All students should remember this.

The study of Sanskrit and English

There is a book titled *Hindu Pantheon*. It is a translation by an Englishman of the stories from the Puranas on Ganesha, Kali, Durga, Shiva, Rudra, Devi, Virbhadra, Vishnu and other gods and goddesses. He has composed essays on them. When this book was printed, it weighed ten kilograms and measured twenty-four by thirty inches! It was priced at fifteen to twenty pounds. The book has pictures of all the main deities: Ganesha, Shiva, Kartikeya, Chandi, Durga, Mahakali, and others. These pictures were not created by any painter; rather, photographs have been printed. Toward the end of the book there is a description of the different *tilaks*, the marks put on the forehead. It describes the tilak that goes from the nose to the centre of the eyebrows, the three lines across the forehead, the ‘U’ shaped one, the tiny ones, all kinds of tilaks and symbols of different faiths have been described and printed. This book became very popular and is now available in several different smaller editions.

This is why I say that if we can combine the knowledge of both English and Sanskrit, a lot of work can be accomplished. If you learn English, then you can do a lot of work on Sanskrit. To qualify for that, learning English is essential. Study English perfectly. The English language will rule the world. It is not possible to remove it. It is not possible for our government. What happened after we chased away the British? We cursed the English language, and sent our children to English medium schools. All hypocrites!

There are so many possibilities for research and development in Sanskrit. The whole science of Ayurveda is in Sanskrit, and there are so many things that are not even taught; there

are the Brahmanas, such as the *Shatapatha Brahmana*, the Aranyas, the Upanishads. There are one hundred and eight recognized Upanishads, and still more Upanishads are yet to be published.

Four purusharthas

There are four kinds of *purusharthas*, efforts, in our lives: *artha*, wealth; *kama*, desire; *dharma*, duty; and *moksha*, liberation. A lot of books have been written on these four *purusharthas*. Vidura, Chanakya and Brihaspati have written *artha shastras*, treatises on statecraft, economic policy and military strategy. Vatsyayana's *Kama Shastra*, a text that aims to instruct the way to attain enjoyment and fulfilment, is very famous. It does not contain only the ordinary matters. It details what a married woman should and should not eat, how she should beautify herself, how she should drape her clothes, what kind of women she should meet, how she should speak to men; everything is written. The aim of the *Kama Shastra* is to maximize your happiness in the little time that you have. Vatsyayana, the author, was a bachelor; he was not married.

The next important category of literature is *moksha shastras*. The Upanishads and the Brahmasutras come under this umbrella. Apart from these, there are *vijnana shastras*, scientific texts, *rasayana shastras*, chemistry texts, *vimana shastras*, texts on aviation, *dhanurveda shastras*, text on weaponry, and so on; there are so many texts. How to make poison and apply it to the arrowhead and which enemy to target; everything is described in minute detail. People study all this with great attention. When I wanted to study it, I used the English translation as the Hindi translations are often not up to the mark. Study the English version of the Upanishads. Those who have translated it into English have done a very fine job as they have many resources. Ultimately, the person who is researching will only be able to publish and print a good translation if he is well funded. Of course, Sanskrit pandits still exist and the tradition continues even today.

In ancient times, were women educated? What was their condition?

People living in India today are mostly descendents of people who have come from outside. Essentially, the natives of India were tribesmen. Various tribes such as Bheel, Kola, Gonda, Moriya, and others were the original inhabitants. This country has water, jungles, plains for farming, good climate, all the conditions to make living and settling easy. All over the world, when the political situation of a country deteriorates, people flee, like they are fleeing from Bosnia and Burma today. Whenever people feel threatened by political turmoil, they gather what they can and leave. In the same way, people from Africa have settled in southern India. People from South-East Asia fled and settled in Assam and Bengal. People from western civilizations settled in Punjab. Those from the Arab countries settled in Rajasthan.

Due to the many different settlers, the fabric of social life in India was very unstable. When people flee with the few belongings that they can gather, then what of things like schools and hospitals? They lived in huts and were nomadic. When the partition of India took place, hundreds of thousands migrated to India. When Bangladesh was created, thousands of people fled. Even today, at Sealdah train station you will find the refugees in thousands. Little children, four to five year old boys and girls living in the station; they have no homes and they have lost their parents. They have become scoundrels and petty thieves; they pick up luggage, scavenge, eat samosas and sleep right there on the station platforms. How will these children study? There is no system, no infrastructure.

In ancient times there were gurukuls. A guru would have his own ashram, his own farm, and all the systems were in place. Children used to go there to study. Some gurukuls taught Ayurveda, some taught history; different gurukuls taught different subjects. Not everybody was able to receive this education, however, only those who had previously settled in those areas did. The refugees from troubled states

did not get an education. For those from the royal families, like Kaikeyi, Rama and Sita, education was mandatory. The education was appropriate for those times, as education changes with time.

What do they teach in the West, in countries like England and America? They do not teach about the lives of Aurangzeb and Maharana Pratap. What good could that possibly do for people in the West? They learn how to run computers and drive cars, they learn engineering, writing and printing, how to build homes or till with small tractors, they learn about ecology and harvest. A small machine can, in a short time, harvest the whole farm and they earn one or two thousand rupees a day. They learn whatever is practical. Not everybody there has a graduate or postgraduate degree. It is compulsory for all to study up to a secondary school level.

After studying up to the age of seventeen or eighteen, they can go into vocational training. After that they start looking for jobs. They work in a butchery, clean toilets, clean sewers, wash clothes; they do any work that comes their way.

Sometimes the feeling of wanting to travel and explore comes after having earned a bit of money. Some go to China, some to Japan, some to India. They travel, they see the world and receive exposure, and then, at the age of approximately twenty-two to twenty-five, they decide what they want to do in life. They attend universities and begin to study something specific. If someone chooses to study English literature and research Shakespeare, then he does not get involved with chemistry, mathematics and the sciences. They choose a subject and intensely study only that. This is how most people study in the West.

Here in India, there is a certain arrogance associated with becoming more educated; the more they study, the bigger brats they become. Take a look at the graduates here; they turn out like film heroes. The teenagers in the West are instructed by the parents to return home by five to six o'clock. Children cannot come and go as they please; they have to fall in line, do their share of work in the house or live on their own. It is

fairly common for four to five students to share an apartment and cook together, study hard and have a good time, too. I am not talking about the wealthy; I am talking about the average students.

There is none of the discrimination between girls and boys in the West as there is in the East. Neither one is superior to the other. Here, there is one set of rules for boys and another set for girls; there, both are treated the same way. There is equal joy at the birth of a boy or girl. Girls are also given a lot of freedom, but they too must follow the rules of the house or else live separately. The girls are also more independent; they can go out in the evenings, to shows, to plays, they go dancing, and so on. There, women do not only sit at home and cook. The wife can tell her husband, "If you want to eat, you cook!"

Another difference is that in the western countries like Canada or Europe, the children do not automatically inherit the wealth of the parents. What is yours will not necessarily be your son's. It is not certain that ancestral properties will automatically become yours. Here, the son keeps an eye on his father's wealth. He thinks, 'If I leave then I will be at a loss. I won't get my father's wealth. I won't get his house.' The wife also thinks the same way, 'If I leave all this and go, it will be my loss.' In western countries, the man calls his lawyer and writes his instructions on a piece of paper, "After my death, this is how I want to distribute my wealth." Often the money is given to some charitable institution, not necessarily to the children. Their thinking is that the children who survive on the wealth of the parents are impotent. There is some truth to it. As long as you know that you will inherit your father's wealth and property, you will never be able to progress. He who believes that he is going to get nothing has to build his own future and can progress.

The system of inheriting from forefathers is the biggest weakness in our country. All over the world it is the poorer nations that have this system, not only in India. All the richer nations have a different system. After the age of eighteen, the

bird flies away from the nest; the calf learns to graze on his own. It is the survival of the fittest. This is their society.

Another aspect is that if a husband and wife do not get along, there will be pressure from neighbours, friends and family for them to separate. The thinking is: if you are together, stay together in a civilized manner; if you are not happy together, what is the point of being married? It is equivalent to permanently carrying the burden of a corpse on your shoulders!

The western countries have a different work ethic or culture. They try to maximize every opportunity to earn money. For the funeral of Princess Diana, florist shops sold millions and millions of dollars worth of flowers in memory of the daughter-in-law of the Queen. Elton John, the famous musician, wrote the song, 'Candle in the Wind', which sold millions of copies worldwide in three days! The song sold like hot cakes in France, England and everywhere else. This money went to a charitable trust and was used for Princess Diana's favourite charities. It has been said that this trust is the biggest of the century.

The western thinking is that one should not interfere in the matters of someone else's livelihood. You must increase the opportunities, so that the earning capacity increases. When you earn, you become independent; you acquire a sense of identity and self-confidence, a sense that you too are capable and need not live off your family fortunes. You must be self-sufficient. This will happen here when our society creates more job opportunities. The biggest shortcoming of our society is that we do not have enough means of livelihood. Everybody should be able to earn, whether by selling flowers, by selling paper, or by selling shoes. Whatever it may be, you will definitely find a customer.

I once sent Swami Satsangi for computer training to London. I told her that I would arrange for the ticket, but that she would have to fend for herself regarding the lodging and boarding. She set off with thirty to forty pairs of *chattisgaddhi chappals*, the kind of basic rustic footwear that farmers wear

to walk into the fields of black soil. She used to stand on the sidewalk with her chappals and sell them. In a short time, she was able to sell them all; so much so that she also sold the ones she was wearing herself and had to return home barefoot! This was the way she paid for her expenses. People there believe that if you buy something, you are helping somebody, never mind if you do not need what you are buying. The thought there is, 'She wants to sell chappals and I have the money, so I must help.' This is the principle of economics; when money changes hands, we are rich, if it stagnates, we are poor. It is only when one is monetarily comfortable that one turns towards spirituality.

When you are satiated and not hungry, when you have a good family, when you are not worried about your job and you are at ease about your home, only in such a situation will you turn towards spirituality. All the swamis who come here leave their jobs. On their return, they just have to call and within a couple of days their jobs and houses are organized. There is nothing complicated or difficult.

A person who is not burdened by the worries of a job or a home or family problems will think, 'I have some free time and I can utilize it much better in Rikhiya or Munger. I can learn asana, pranayama, yoga, naturopathy, meditation, the Vedas, the Upanishads, I can learn everything.'

Things are different in the West and in India. We have undergone centuries of foreign influence. Different nations have ruled this country. They laid down laws in accordance with their beliefs and customs. There were invasions from the Muslims, from Greece, from the Huns, from the English. Whoever rules leaves the mark of their customs and norms on society. The English gave us the English language, the Muslims taught us Urdu, gave women the veil and men the beard. They had a far-reaching influence in every field. Now some of these influences must go.

The vedic spirit endorsed independence. Education was an important part of society and the Vedas were read and taught. There were great rishis like Vasishtha. There were

great munis like Agastya, who travelled from the northern part of India to the south, where they constructed Tamil grammar and taught the Tamil language. Back then, women were educated. It was only after the Muslims arrived that education for women ceased. In those times, due to the culture from which they came, it was not safe for women to be left alone. In order to increase the population of his state, Muslim kings would have over one hundred wives who would produce children. Women were kidnapped to bear children. The Muslims enforced the same laws here in India.

The same customs predominated in the countries of the Middle East and Greece. Even today, if a widow removes her veil and has a relationship with a man, they both will be stoned to death. Muslims left that mark in our country; widows must never remarry. However, not everybody accepted this. In the hills of Kumaon, a woman remains a widow for just twenty-four hours. After mourning, she is made to wear the traditional bangles again, a symbol of a married woman. More often than not, the husband's brother takes his place; they do not let the widow remain alone, so they seek someone within the family as soon as possible. There are many places in the world, not only in Kumaon, where widow remarriage is prevalent, for example in Indonesia.

As times change, society should also change. Is it civilized to publicly stone a widow to death? It is savagery. In Rajasthan, they burn widows alive, even today. Is this being civilized? Those living in cities should think over these ills and initiate discussions on them, open debates and forums in which everybody participates, from teenagers to adults to senior citizens. Just as we take a shower in the bathroom, cook in the kitchen, and perform all tasks only in the places where they are meant to be carried out, we must, in our society, snuff out the evils swiftly in the places where they erupt, right there and then. On becoming a widow, whether it is the daughter or your daughter-in-law, she must not be asked to change her attire and wear white clothes. She must not be stopped from participating in auspicious occasions. It is wrong, and if this is



insisted upon, then the same regulations should be enforced upon men. When there are rules for widows, then why not for widowers? Let them also wear only white and shave off their moustache.

We must introduce those things in society which bring peace and happiness, which bring progress and prosperity. Times were different for the previous generation; things are different for us. In those days the population of India was three hundred million; today it is over one billion. In those days you could travel all over the village in one dhoti; today if you try to go to Deoghar in a dhoti, you will probably get beaten up. It is necessary to change with the times and place. You and I alone cannot do this. There must be discussion and debate in society, in all communities and sects. There is no superior or inferior caste or community. They are all one. Everybody goes together to a restaurant; everybody goes to work together. Brahmins are now working in companies like

Bata and Tata. One makes shoes and the other steel! This would have been inconceivable for brahmins some decades ago. Cobbler, ironmonger, these are different professions, yet we are all one race; we are humans.

Amongst the human race, some people are more intelligent than others. It is not as though brahmins are born from the mouth of God and shudras from His feet; people of both castes are born from their mother's womb after nine months and both are governed by nature's laws. The same law of nature that governed your birth applies to everybody else. Kshatriyas, vaishyas, shudras, Hindus and Muslims are all born under nature's laws, so where did the discrimination of caste come from? We created it and it will stay. However, now nobody follows it. You buy supplies from a store owned by a Muslim, so what of race and what of caste? It is not necessary to believe in all this. Humanity is a race. Your birth and death and my birth and death are governed by the same laws. The laws of eating, digesting and excreting are the same for all of us. There is no difference.

Just as Sage Vasishtha was a scholar amongst *brahmins*, the priestly caste, there was Valmiki, a celebrated poet among the *shudras*, the caste considered to be the least spiritually developed. Out of the royal families, Mirabai is considered to have been the most ardent *bhakta* or devotee, yet there have been many such devotees from among the shudras, too. Sahajobai was the disciple of Charandas, Ramdas was a cobbler, Gora was a potter, Saghna was a butcher and Guru Nanaka was a kayastha. They will now have to be all brought together.

I am addressing this to all the youth. What I am saying should appeal to them. Whether or not it appeals to the older people does not matter. Once a German girl had come to India as a tourist and a rickshaw driver from Jaipur was taking her around all day and showing her different places. He was not very educated, yet she was so impressed with his behaviour that she married him. There was an uproar in the boy's family, as he married outside his caste and consequently no one would marry their girls. The German girl was smart

and competent. She saw that the boy was being harassed by his family and so she immediately took him to Delhi, got him a passport and they left for Germany. He finished his education there and now they both live a happy life.

The question is, what did the girl see in the boy? He was not well educated, nor was he of the same social background as her. She was fair and he must have been wheat complexioned. When the press questioned her, she said she liked his temperament, his nature. He never once asked for money; he kept saying, "We'll see about it later." All day he drove her around. Any other rickshaw driver would have pestered her the whole time and not stayed until the end of the day.

At the end of the day, when she went to pay him, he said he would come the next day also. This went on for a week. He took her to all the palaces and tourist spots in and around the city. At the end of the week, he insisted that she should give him whatever she thought was appropriate; he did not make any demand. She gave him one thousand US dollars. In those days it amounted to twelve thousand Indian rupees! The driver refused. He told her that those were not his rates; twelve thousand rupees for one week was too much. He kept approximately seven hundred and fifty rupees and returned the rest. She was totally struck by his integrity and she started talking to him. She then said she would like to take him around for a change and hired a cab for them to see the city together. They sat in the cab, drove around for a bit, went to the temple and got married! The police accused him of entrapping her. She quickly whisked him off to Delhi, got his passport and they left for Germany.

What I am trying to say is that when you get married, what are going to look for? Will you look for the person's caste or the temperament? Won't you check to see if the person you want to spend the rest of your life with is compatible? It is not enough to go by the bank balance or the position in society or the father's property and wealth. You want to marry the person, not the father, so you must see if the person is right for you. You do not want problems after marriage.

Satsang 6

15 September 1997



Religion

Every society functions according to the circumstances it finds itself in and makes its rules accordingly. The creation of society, of culture, of politics and religion is dependent on

the prevailing circumstances. Religion, for example, is not created by God; rather, it is a creation of man. The learned ones among men create certain rules according to prevailing circumstances, which are then called religion, as people are not ready to obey simply because they are told. As a result, in the beginning, whatever message had to be delivered, was done through the medium of religion. For example, the simple ideas, 'Have a bath in the morning', 'Do not stand and urinate anywhere', 'Clean up after passing a stool and wash your hands,' were all made a part of religious rules so people would follow them, for in those days people had great respect for religion. Today, we have greater respect for science. Religion today is the outsider. This is the age of science.

If we were to challenge religion today, we would have to challenge all the traditions. The trouble is, except for the Hindu and vedic religions, no religion likes to be challenged. We like challenges because we know that what our ancestors said was right for that time, but that it does not necessarily hold true today as well. These days, would you go to work in a factory wearing a dhoti? Would you wear woollens when visiting a country that has a hot climate? Just as we change our clothes according to the season, people need to change according to the prevailing circumstances. In the olden days, the circumstances were such that girls used to get married at the age of nine or ten. Today things are different.

According to the health sciences, the right time for a girl to marry is between the age of twenty and twenty-five years. Under no circumstances should she get married before the age of twenty, as her reproductive system, hormones and body are not yet ready. In the same way, a boy is not ready for marriage before the age of twenty-five. From the scientific viewpoint, there should be an age difference of at least twenty-five years between a father and a child. Suppose a boy gets married at the age of thirteen and he has a child. There is only a fourteen-year gap between him and his child. If the difference is only fourteen years, their state of mind will be

the same. Thus, a difference of twenty-five years minimum between father and child is considered necessary.

Marriage and the last rites should be performed according to the age we live in. In India, cremation is performed with wood, yet in other countries, cremation is now carried out with gas and electricity. In Japan, wood is never used for cremation, only electricity is used. We need to adapt to the present circumstances. Our ancestors linked the last rites ceremony to religion so we need wood, sandalwood and ghee. The *dom*, the worker at the cremation grounds, used to bring the vessels, the fire and all kinds of things, and received gifts. That was appropriate in those times; however, today when cremations are performed using electricity, we don't need those things. Whatever prayers and religious rites have to be performed, they can be done outside the crematorium. After that, the body is put into the chamber and the button is pressed. The body enters through one door and pure ash comes out through the other door. This ash is in its pure form whereas in the time of our father and grandfather, the ashes were not pure; they were mixed with pieces of wood, cinders, coal and other things. In electric cremations, the ash is completely pure and comes in a bottle with the name and a number written on it. It is also cheaper, costing only two to three hundred rupees. Otherwise, a lot of wood is needed.

In the past, last rite ceremonies were linked to religion. Today, they are linked to practical considerations. If we were to say, "If there is no wood there will be no smoke, so what will happen to the soul?" it would not be correct thinking. In present times, we should think in a scientific manner. Our vedic religion has always moved according to the times and circumstances, and maybe that is why it is still alive, in spite of the thousands of years of change.

In the destiny of any religion there are two possibilities: end or eternity. The end means the religion dies; it is wiped out. After that you have to start another religion. The other possibility is eternity. That is true religion, to keep making slight modifications to suit the changing times without

compromising its original essence. Is the red *tika* or dot between the eyebrows worn by married women in India inscribed in the religion? Today, married women who live and work in England and the US do not like this. The vedic tradition says, “No problem.” Whether a married woman wears *sindoor*, the red powder applied in the centre hair parting, or not, whether she wears a *mangalsutra*, a chain made of black beads, or not, whether she wears a ring or not, she remains a married woman. Why is there a need to show other people, “I am a married woman?” Why should this be demonstrated by wearing sindoor? The vedic tradition does not consider such things compulsory. The practice of *purdah*, wearing of a veil, is not compulsory. Today, girls wear their hair short. Does this strike a blow to religion? Religion means something else. Forgiveness, compassion, endurance, self-control; this is true religion. The rules you observe when a child is born, what you feed it, how you perform the naming ceremony, whether the girl sits on the right or the left side during the wedding ceremony; these matters are not of great importance.

Was the custom of divorce prevalent in ancient times?

Divorce was not customary in ancient times. Let me give you an example. Lord Rama did not give Sita a divorce; he abandoned her. That meant that Sita’s sons still had the right of succession to the throne. If Rama had divorced Sita, who would have ascended to the throne? Every era has its own customs and practices: patriarchal and matriarchal. In a patriarchal society the children are considered to belong to the father, and in a matriarchal society, to the mother.

Our society is no longer matriarchal. After the Mahabharata war, it began to turn into a patriarchal society. Rama was known as Kaushalya’s son, Krishna was known as Yashoda’s son, and Bharata, as Kaikeyi’s son. Earlier in vedic society, the mother was considered the most important member of the family. The tribals, *adivasis*, followed the matriarchal system. Nowadays, the word ‘motherland’ has

come to mean ‘my country’; however, in those days it meant that this is the mother’s land. The same applies to language. ‘Mother tongue’ referred to the language that the mother spoke. My mother tongue is not Hindi, but Nepali, as that was my mother’s language. Similarly, there is mother’s property and mother’s son. Who is my mother? *Putrohan prithviah* – “The earth is my mother”, as it is written. So, in those days, the mother was the prominent figure.

Gradually, society kept changing. A lot has changed in the centuries-old histories of the Greeks, Europeans and Muslims. The Greeks came, followed by the Mughals and then the English. Slowly, customs changed and women were pushed into staying within the four walls of the house, because it became necessary to do so. Whatever can be stolen is protected carefully. Would you keep your TV or any other valuable article outdoors? No, they need to be kept hidden inside. Nevertheless, since the advent of the European culture, circumstances are changing yet again, as their society is neither matriarchal nor patriarchal. It is balanced; the rights of mother and father are equal. Mothers and fathers have an equal share in the children, property, country and society. They have adopted this balanced view and we also like this.

I believe the main reason for this way of thinking is due to the industrial revolution and not the people of Europe. The circumstances created by the industrial revolution made people leave their homes and run away; the husband went to the city and the wife stayed back in the village. In such circumstances, people created a new society which we call ‘modern culture’. It would be incorrect to call it ‘western culture’, since England and America also followed the same culture that I referred to earlier; they followed the patriarchal system, not the matriarchal system. Now people have changed this. In my opinion, the prevailing culture is in conformity with the times. In this respect, the Indian thinking has been faulty to some extent. The thoughts behind several customs are not ours; they are the result of the attacks and atrocities committed on our society and culture in the medieval ages

and the influence of various foreign cultures. The Chinese came, the Turks came, and then the Mongols, and what we now believe and have accepted as our own is, in reality, the influence of their cultures and lifestyles.

The vedic culture was a free culture. A free culture is one in which there is not just one thing that is considered to be right. They said, *Neti, neti* – “Not this, not this.” Our ancestors have discussed God openly. Somebody said one thing and someone else said something else and diametrically opposing views were expressed. Even on the topic of marriage one person said one way was correct and another had other ideas. Someone said, “This is wrong” and someone else said, “No, that is right.” In the Vedas, there are a number of references that illustrate this.

Now we come to the question of succession. If the father dies, who will inherit his wealth? If the mother dies who will inherit her wealth? What is the definition of a son and a daughter? When we started defining these things, one person said, “That woman has a relationship with that man, so he is her husband.” Another said, “No, he is not her husband.” If he is not her husband then the son cannot be hers either. In the vedic culture, all these matters are discussed openly so one could mould oneself according to the changing social scenario.

If a girl and boy fall in love and get married and you refuse to accept the marriage, what will their legal status be? What will their social status be? When a boy kidnaps a girl and marries her, what will their social status be? All these discussions are a part of vedic literature. Twenty-four types of sons are described.

The life born out of union between a man and woman has twenty-four different types of status. The highest among these is *auras putra*, meaning legitimately born. The legal rights of an *auras putra* are the highest because such a marriage was in accordance with the rules of the prevalent social thinking of the age, whether the religion of that time was Christian, Muslim, Hindu, or any other. What was the status

of Dushyant's son Bharat? Was he legitimate or illegitimate? His mother and father had a *gandharva marriage*, a marriage based simply on mutual agreement. If they had not had a *gandharva marriage* he would not have been able to ascend the throne. All these things are important. Marriage is so closely related to wealth, succession, society and country, that our learned men thought deeply about it.

Marriage is not just a relationship between two bodies or two individuals, nor is it just an emotional or social relationship. It is the meeting of two sets of genes, a hereditary mingling, since the genes of the husband and wife come from different pools. To date, scientists have been able to identify two thousand million genes, and the science of heredity is quite recent. When genes are compatible, healthy children are born. Otherwise sick, handicapped or mentally unstable children are born. Try as you may to have them treated by the best doctors, they remain sick all their lives. Not just cancer or diabetes, but all existing diseases are considered hereditary.

What is the relationship between gotra and genes?

The truth is *gotra*, spiritual lineage, is related to genes, yet until recently people did not believe this since there was no available scientific explanation. Now, however, people have read both scientific literature and also the Vedas. Marriage is mainly related to procreation. In order to distance themselves from the guilt associated with procreation, people adopted the system of marriage and created rules and practices. The priest, the mother and father were brought into the picture. Still, guilt crept in again about procreation. Therefore, an identity had to be given to what was being procreated. Ultimately, society will be affected by this and so will wealth and property, and many other things. Marriage has, in a way, been made into a code of law. Marriage means a code of conduct between husband and wife.

The main purpose of marriage is procreation. In medieval times, hundreds of years ago when dacoity was prevalent, men used to elope with women. There was also an era of

kidnapping women, they were forcibly taken away. We have read this in history. Two hundred women would be stolen and the men who did this were applauded. Women were won in battle. Why? The reason was to expand their lineage. If two to four hundred women were taken, then in a year at least two to three hundred children would be born.

Do you know what goes wrong in such procreation? These days, we believe it is necessary for the two sets of genes to be opposites. In vedic times, and for those who followed its tenets, the gotra was referred to. The gotras are named after rishis, for example, Kashyap gotra and Garga gotra. Who knows whether this gotra was really the name of a rishi or if it was the name of a gene or a genetic code! For a man and a woman to get married, being of the same caste is not essential, nor is it important whether they are white or black. You do not need to think of whether one is from a rich family or a poor one. All one needs to know and understand is whether the relationship between the two will be able to produce the best possible offspring who is intelligent, strong and healthy. This is what is most important. If, from birth, the child has a cataract or keeps coughing and has to be given medicine throughout his life, then the illness is hereditary.

Neither science nor culture has been able to provide a remedy for hereditary illnesses. Only in the Vedas has it been thoroughly discussed and now, modern science is doing research on it. In Europe, marriages take place between any girl and boy. If they are Muslim, they'll go to the mosque; if Christian, they'll go to the church; that is the only identity. However, modern science is thinking about this. In India, horoscopes are matched; castes and gotras are matched as well. None of this has worked either, for if we take a look at the state of health of the people in India or their illnesses, we have to acknowledge that we are definitely making a mistake somewhere.

If scientists were to speak up, they would be able to convince people. In today's age, all over the world and especially in educated societies, the trend is towards love

and romance. If two people fall in love with each other, that becomes the reason to get married. As I mentioned earlier, some years ago a German girl visited Rajasthan as a tourist. She fell in love with a rickshaw driver and married him. There was great opposition from the local people and they were even arrested by the police. They were released, however, since both were adults. The law says you have the right to marry anyone you choose. That boy went abroad with her.

These days there is a lot of anarchy in the state of Bihar. What is the solution for this?

Punishment does not succeed in correcting a person. Why is that so? The answer to this has been given in the scriptures. When God, whether you call him Brahma, Ishwara, Khuda or God, created the world, he took three *gunas* or elements – sattwaguna, rajoguna and tamoguna – and joined these three together. It is through the different combinations of these three elements that the world was created. This means that you have these three elements in you and so do I. Now the books state that these *gunas* are the altered form of Nature. Just as curd is an altered form of milk, the *gunas* are an altered form of Nature. It is Nature alone that creates the world, not God. God only waves the green flag.

The scriptures state that the aspect of Nature responsible for creation is *maya*, illusion. Nature, human beings included, is made up of the three *gunas*: sattwaguna, rajoguna and tamoguna. Therefore, you will find people who possess all three *gunas* in this world. The people in whom sattwaguna predominates are the good people, those in whom rajoguna predominates are the aggressive, greedy ones, and those in whom tamoguna predominates are robbers and thieves. Bihar also has people with all three *gunas*, and Bihar also has a lot of poverty.

Satsang 7

16 September 1997



There are thousands of ways to be happy, to find peace, to find God, and awaken yogic strength. The easiest way, which our guru Swami Sivananda has told us about, is mentioned in the *Ramacharitamanas* and has been talked about by Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Christ and Mohammad; it is the path of *seva*, service. Yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi are the eight limbs of the yoga of Patanjali. Swami Sivananda's eightfold yoga consists of serve, love, give, purify your heart, meditate on God, realize Him, be good, and do good.

Enjoyment is not a right

God has a principle and Lakshmi has a rule, 'Whatever you have is not yours alone. Whatever you have also belongs to a poor person. If you think that whatever you have is yours alone, then we will stop giving you cheques. We will give only as much as is necessary. If you take more, we will take it back in some other way. We will give cancer to one, diabetes to another and TB to some other person; someone's house will get burgled. One way or another, we will take it back.' This is exactly what God is doing. Aren't people who have a lot of money unhappy? They grab five hundred dollars in one situation and they lose the same amount or even more, in another situation. I know this. That is why I keep a stern eye on my sannyasins. Sannyasins have no right to enjoyment. Neither do householders, yet they have been given a little liberty.

The day you took the resolve of sannyasa, you also took another resolve, the resolve of *nyasa*, of being a trustee. Renunciation is not the most important meaning of sannyasa. Sannyasa means a 'trust'. Trust means faith. People say, "Swamiji does not have anything; no wife, no child, no house or household, nor does he spend much on himself. Why don't we do something worthwhile through him?" Everyone would like to do good work, yet no one knows how to go about it. A sannyasin becomes the medium through which good work can be done. You want to do good work, but you don't have an opportunity or know the right way to go about it. That is why you work through the medium of Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave and others. After all, why were thousands of people crazy about Mother Teresa? It was because she became a medium. Gandhiji became a medium for the expression of a desire for freedom for Indians. I became a medium for the good resolve of all of you. Wouldn't you feel troubled if you saw someone lying on the road and suffering? What can you do? You have to go to work, look after your family and study. That is why you need a medium.

Mother Teresa was a medium and she fulfilled her duty very well. That's why she won the respect of the

Indian nation. After Mahatma Gandhi, if anyone was given nationwide respect, it was Mother Teresa. She didn't even belong to our religion. There's not much left in religion; it has just become a social identity. Religion, community and caste are only social symbols. Mother Teresa was a Catholic. In the history of Christianity, the Pope has never sent a representative to the funeral of an ascetic until today. Whenever a Catholic ascetic dies, the Pope sends a message but never a representative. The only exception to this practice has been Mother Teresa.

After a person has completed all their karma, they must become the medium of God. Whoever works for the good of others becomes free from all attachments. Who am I attached to? Not to a woman or son or brother or nephew or mother-in-law or father-in-law; I am attached to no one. Attachment is of the mind and I have told my mind, 'Son, be careful.'

My followers also do not have any demands. It is impossible for a disciple of Swami Satyananda to make a demand. I would throw him out with a kick. Everyone is afraid of me; I am well known for that. I've grown old, yet even now they are afraid of me. Earlier I would even beat them. There is a saying, "Why did the betel leaf rot, why did the horse refuse to budge, why did the disciple become spoilt?" It is because they were not attended to. Disciples have to be worked on. In all these years I have never worn a watch. There's one hung in front of me, from which I check the time. It's not that one doesn't need a watch; however, people crave a watch, especially a Swiss watch. A watch is a small thing, still these little things create tendencies.

Be simple

The sadhus and sages who live in ashrams have simple food habits. In Rishikesh, we used to get four rotis from Kali Kamliwala and rice from the Punjab-Sindh kshetra. We used to go out to ask for *bhiksha*, alms, every day. Why? This was our custom. Householders would give food to sadhus. They would say, "Go and sing bhajans." There were two kshetras in

Rishikesh. A *kshetra* is a place where you are given free food. Kali Kamliwala Maniram felt great compassion so he opened a *kshetra*. The Punjab-Sindh *kshetra* was started by Punjabis and Sindhis together. At ten o'clock, the Kali Kamliwala *kshetra* used to give four rotis and dal. We would put these four rotis and dal into our bowls and then proceed to the Punjab-Sindh *kshetra*, since a person can't survive on just four rotis. There we would get some more rotis and a bit of rice and dal. Sometimes a *bhandara*, a special meal provided for holy men, was organized and we would get *halva*, a sweet, and sometimes clothes, too. At times, if a charitable person came by, we would get a blanket and money as well.

We used to have collective *bhandaras*. By collective, I mean anyone could come and sit there and eat. This is the rule for sadhus in Rishikesh, Haridwar and Varanasi. It is said that no one can remain hungry in Varanasi. You can walk into any *kshetra* and you are sure to get food. Why? It is because they say, "Oh sadhu, we are giving you two rotis and rice. Eat and sing bhajans in praise of God." Our society has supported sadhus and sannyasins since ancient times. They were supported by kings also, even during the reign of the Muslims. We find messages on copper plates written in the times of Akbar, Aurangzeb and Shah Jehan. There is a *patta*, a written agreement or contract, on Kabir Chaura. It is written there that 'these four acres of land belonging to Kabir Chaura have been donated by the Mughal Emperor with no tax to be levied on it'. This letter is found in every ashram of Kabir. In Varanasi, Gyan Guddi is a big institution with a very old library. It was given to them on contract during Akbar's time. Not just in the times when the Hindu traditions were at their peak, but also during the Buddhist era, their institutions were given land and support. During the time of Jainism, the Jain institutions received assistance. Go to South India, North India or any other part of the country, sadhus and saints have always been looked after. Many of these sadhus were not fit to be sadhus, yet that is what they had become.

Selfless service

If we support a hundred widows by paying them for saying the Lord's name, and even one out of them is exceptional, she will work for the welfare of society. This isn't anything new, yet I am giving it a new form. It will be written in the receipt that twenty-four rupees were received from Sivananda Math for doing Ramanaam japa for eight hours. She will write her name below and sign. I have only given it a modern form. I always tell sadhus and sannyasins that society is highly indebted to you.

The duties of a sannyasin are fixed. Spreading the name of God and devotion, as given in the *Bhagavad Gita*, is the first duty. The second is to help others. These are the two duties; there isn't a third. How many pilgrimages are made, how much pooja is performed, how much penance is done, how much mantra japa is practised, how the mark on the forehead is applied, the kind of clothes worn; all this is not duty. A sannyasin can act independently in these matters; he can act according to his religion. If he belongs to the Vairagi sect, he should live like a Vairagi; if he is Udasi, he should live like an Udasi; or if he is of a sannyasa order, he should live like a sannyasin; those are the rules of the sects. The sages have always instructed us to repeat the name of God. In the era when they believed in *Advaita Vedanta*, the philosophy of non-duality, the Upanishads were written. When God was worshipped with form, the *Ramacharitamanas* and *Srimad Bhagavatam* were written. Today, all over India, the *Ramayana* and the *Srimad Bhagavatam* are recited everywhere.

My guru, Swami Sivananda, used to be very pleased with me because whenever we received mangoes or sweets for the ashram he would ask, "Who should we give this to?" and I would reply, "First of all, we will give it to the lepers and then we will eat whatever is left." If he had asked someone else they would have said, "We will give it to everyone at the ashram first and give what is left to the lepers." Swami Sivananda would say to me, "Your perspective is the right one. How did

you learn to think that way? You come from a rich family and rich people do not think that way.”

The influence of western culture

The Indian society has been influenced by the culture of the West. Some practices and customs are suitable and natural to them. In the West, these look good and seem fine. However, when these practices come here, they seem strange because they have been brought in from a foreign culture. Now, how do we stop this foreign culture from influencing Indian society? Do you make laws like the Taliban and Aurangzeb? No, the positive always wins over the negative. If you wish to remove a small line then draw a big line in front of it. You certainly have positive strength. You have the *Ramayana* and the story of Hanuman, Krishna, the gods and goddesses, and the great personalities. There are TV programs and songs based on them. These will not be able to completely destroy the negative influence of western culture; however, it will at least correct it.

There is nothing wrong with other cultures. Just as there are varied sweets made of milk and a Bengali likes rasagulla, a person from Deoghar likes pedas and someone else likes rasamalai. However, the fact remains that all three are made of milk. If you don't like that one, take this one instead.

The main difference between the cultures of India and the West is that in ancient cultures, whether it is ours or that of Muslims, Buddhists, the Chinese or Japanese, what was emphasized was improving life, society and one's self, and God was the aim or goal of life. One should also think of the next birth. It is not just about the present.

This is not the case in western culture. They are not aware of anything called rebirth. With them, everything ends in the grave; however, with us only one chapter ends in the grave; the book does not end. The graveyard is the end of only a chapter, not the entire book. There are numerous births. I am saying this because I know it is so. It is not just based on book knowledge.



Whenever I went abroad and there was a discussion on this subject, I used to say the same thing. Once I told someone there to buy an old house. He said, “No, Swamiji. There is a ghost inhabiting the place.” I replied, “When you do not believe in rebirth, how can there be a ghost?” Earlier, Christians also believed in rebirth. However, in the sixth or seventh century there was a big conference in Istanbul. There, a resolution was passed that the belief in rebirth should no longer be part of the Christian religion. The fact that belief in rebirth was removed by a resolution seems so strange. Why not do away with God then, as well? Everyone has experienced rebirth. If you believe in ghosts, then it follows that you believe in rebirth. Why bother with others? Ask yourself if you believe in rebirth or not. If you get an answer from within saying, “Yes” then believe in rebirth. What I am saying is that we believe in something that lives on even after death.

The ‘mysterious government’

In this creation, there is someone who looks after everyone. Things do not happen on their own. Nothing evolves on its own. Your children were not born on their own. They are not the result of an accidental occurrence: not me, not you or anyone else. There is a force, a God, who does this. Just as India has a government, similarly, there is a government that runs the various departments of this universe. In English, we call it the cosmic government and in the Upanishads it is referred to as the imperishable government. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, Yajnavalkya said to Gargi, *Etasya va aksharasya prashaasane Gargi suryachandramasau vidhritau tishta* – “In this mysterious government, the sun and the moon stay separate, never colliding into each other. They go along their own paths in their own way. The river always flows down from the top.” A lot of other similar things are written in this Upanishad about how this government looks after everything.

The whole creation is under an illusion. You think that your mother and grandmother were born and then they died; that you were young once and then simply became old. In the same way, the various living organisms and elements seem to change in nature, too. However, all this does not happen on its own. Everything is controlled by different forces, called *devatas* or gods. Every place has a devata who looks after that place. When I bought the adjacent land, I drove out the old devata of that place as he had not looked after the land well, nor had he helped the owner to develop the place.

When I bought Tapowan, I performed the *bhoomi poojan*, land worship ceremony. The one-month program of Sita’s wedding was performed for this purpose. The *bhoomi poojan* was just an excuse because Sita is the daughter of earth, the goddess of land. There are many stories about her. I told the devata of that place, “You leave. You have not looked after this place well. You have ruined the land.”

Every piece of land has a devata and that is why the ritual of *bhoomi poojan* is conducted. The earth is a living element. The earth is as alive as we are; in fact, the earth is a more alive

element than us. The earth is called *devi*, goddess, and we have to repay our debt to her. You are indebted to God who looks after your house, family, business, cattle, dogs, and so forth. Different traditions use different symbols to denote this residence of God in everything. In Greece, it is the basilica and among Hindus it is the tulsi plant and the peepal tree. I worship tulsi and peepal every day by lighting incense and a lamp. Why should I not believe in this God? Where is the harm in it? Just because you cannot see God, you say he is formless! No, God has a form, but I cannot see it. That is why there is a symbol for Him.

Presiding gods of Kali Yuga

In the Kali Yuga there are only two things that are important. Firstly, to live well: reside in a good house, wear good clothes and speak good things. This is the way of Ganesha. Ganesha does not wear a loin cloth and sit among snakes and scorpions the way Shiva does. He wears beautiful silk clothes, applies cosmetics and eats sweets. He has a nice, fat stomach! He is a big scholar, well-educated and full of wisdom. This is today's era. Shiva was not educated, but Ganesha likes learning and discussing things. He wrote the entire *Mahabharata*. Vyasadeva would dictate and he would go on writing.

The second important thing is Devi in the form of the goddess Lakshmi. Money, money, money; today's man just accumulates wealth. That is why it is written in the scriptures: *Kalau Chandivinyakau* – “In the Kali Yuga it is important to worship Ganesha and Devi.”

Today, a person wants just two things; to live well and have money in the bank. Doesn't everyone want to be well-educated, get a job and possess power of communication? The salary should be good, the house should be good, you should marry someone from a good family, and if you are sick, the medicine should also be good. This is the way shown by Ganesha, not Shiva. Shiva can go to sleep anywhere, even in your cowshed. He says, “What's the difference? After all, you only need to sleep.” However, today's person says, “I'll

not sleep in the toilet or the drawing room; I'll only sleep in the bedroom and that, too, must be a good one." This is the demand of today's man. Secondly, there should be money. There should be some savings in the bank and some in insurance.

Faith

I am not talking of external appearances here. When I discuss Ganesha, Lakshmi or Chandi, these are hidden matters. This is a mysterious subject, but I am trying to explain it in a way that you can understand and accept. If I say God is without form, what will you do? You cannot do anything. However, when I say God has a form, a body, a trunk and a tail, you can understand Him. It is even possible that you may get His blessings, or at least He will become the focus of your faith.

Man's biggest wealth is faith and belief. Swami Vivekananda used to say that nothing is impossible for the person who has strong faith and belief. Jesus Christ and Mohammad used to say the same thing. Faith and belief are very strong forces. They should never break. There are many people who cut up the photographs of gods and goddesses and throw them away. No, faith and belief are a person's greatest treasures.

I am not that interested in spreading religion. My biggest endeavour is to make every individual experience God with form. If all of creation has form, then how can God be without form? You cannot say that a thing has no form just because you cannot see it with your eyes. The wind cannot be seen by the eyes, but it is not without form. If you shut your ears completely now when I am speaking, you will not be able to hear my voice. Does that mean I am not speaking at all? Am I not articulating the words? Are there no sound waves coming out of my mouth? Still, you will not be able to hear. You need ears for words, eyes for form, nose for fragrance, tongue for taste, skin for touch, mind for thought and faith for God. Faith enables you to see God. You can smell God, you can taste Him, you can hear Him and you can touch Him.

However, you need to have faith to do that. You can certainly experience God with form. That experience can be similar to the experience of Tulsidas:

*Chitrakoot ke ghaat par bhai santan ki bhir
Tulsidas chandan ghise tilak det Raghubir*

On the banks of Chitrakoot sages have gathered;
Tulsidas makes sandalwood paste and Rama applies
it on everyone's forehead.

The experience may be felt in the form of a voice from heaven, meaning an inner sound. God does not have only one form; you may see Him in many different forms: words, touch, nectar, fragrance, Devi or Kundalini.

How will we recognize God?

How do you recognize a rasagulla? When God arrives, one knows clearly it is God. There is no confusion as to whether it is a rasagulla or a jalebi! A sweet is a sweet and God is God. It is not necessary that the world will disappear when God arrives. Yes, it is also true that when God arrives you obtain full knowledge and there is nothing left to know; the world becomes a void. However, when there is darshan of God during the ordinary moments of one's life, then the world does not cease to exist. When Tulsidas was applying a tilak on the forehead of the idol, he experienced God, but he was also aware of himself at the same time. He was aware that he was in infinite space and also that there were other people around him.

The knowledge of God also contains the knowledge of the world, though we make a mistake here sometimes. Many people do get a glimpse of God and they want it again. You will not get it again because that experience carries a message for you that you must follow a certain path. Therefore, whenever you get an experience, change your lifestyle or your thinking. That experience came to give you inspiration, a message or an order. Suppose your house is not in good condition and

I give you the Mona Lisa painting as a gift. It means I wish that you will have a good house soon. Now you have a small dilapidated little hut; where will you hang a painting of the Mona Lisa? First, get your house in order and then I will visit you again. Similarly, the experience God is indicative of something. Everyone experiences God in his or her life, whether you call it a divine experience, a spiritual experience or a glimpse of God. However, it does not come twice.

Are we aware of it, Swamiji?

Yes, always. Someone experiences it as light, someone else as a fragrance; one person sees it one way and someone else in another.

However, we are indifferent to it; otherwise, everyone's life would change.

I will tell you my own story. In 1963, I went to Tryambakeshwar. I was totally disheartened as I was not able to start my work anywhere. My guru had told me, "You can establish yoga" but I wasn't able to do anything. No money or assistance was coming forth. People would learn asana and pranayama and merely reimburse the travel expenses. I was going through very difficult times. I prayed to my ishta devata at Tryambakeshwar to help me for twenty years so I could establish yoga in accordance with my guru's wishes. Thereafter, I established yoga everywhere and gave it a respectful academic status.

Along with the prayer, I had also promised God that I would give up everything once I achieved success. After that prayer, I achieved great success but I forgot my promise. That is why I met with an accident and my chances of survival were just thirty percent. I went to Tryambakeshwar in a wheelchair and just as I bowed my head before God, I remembered my promise. I made the decision to leave Munger. In 1983, I resigned as the President of the Bihar School of Yoga and finally in 1988, I left Munger as well. It is so easy to forget one's promise.

Satsang 8

17 September 1997



There are two sides to social work; one involves doing good for the sake of others and the other involves performing service for your own purification. Whatever you do for others, in the end it reaches God. You dedicate it to God, not to human beings. You are just a medium; God is the One who gets it. Hindus, Christians and Muslims all hold this same view and say the same thing.

Social responsibility

A householder who is only interested in family and children in his life can also be an agent of service. However, what should be the main concern in life for a person who has left home and has nothing to do with spouse, children or family? If he does not care about food, soap, toothpaste or blankets, if he

has no worry or necessity, then he should become a medium for all others. This is a very important point. People do not have a responsibility just to their family; they also have a responsibility towards society. I am not just responsible for my institution; I also have a social responsibility.

We must accomplish that social responsibility either from the spiritual perspective by becoming a medium of God or by working for the welfare of others by using our wealth. This choice depends on your belief. Those who are spiritually inclined will think according to the first perspective, and the modern people will think, 'Okay, a part of my income will go towards the welfare of others.' This is all right for householders since they need to keep a balance between social and family obligations. A sannyasin, however, does not have any family responsibility. He should not have any friend; he should have no relationship with anyone. He should care only for others, especially those who do not have anyone to look after them. A young person can look after himself, but a sick, old person cannot look after himself. Social responsibility should begin with such people.

Social responsibility is necessary because we have an obligation towards society. In ancient times, this was called a *rina* or karmic debt: a debt to God, a debt to the sages, a debt to the parents, a debt to all forms of life, and a debt to humankind. These five debts are called social obligations in modern language, and you will never be free from them. Every individual is indebted to society. If there is no society there will be no safety. You will have to pay your debt to society, but what will you do and how will you do it? There should a way, a medium. The lofty souls, the wise ones and the sadhus are the mediums. We can fulfil our societal obligations through the sadhus. I am sitting here. If you want to give cattle, who will you give them to? I know who needs them. If you want to give a bicycle, who will you give it to? You do not know, but I know which girl should be given one. Since the time I arrived here, all the girls have started studying. They have become so enthusiastic.

Purifying the mind

The biggest mistake in our society is that five hundred litres of milk will be offered in a temple, yet no one will give five litres of milk to a sick man. A person thinks, 'I will not be blessed by giving this sick man milk; however, if I offer five hundred litres of milk to Shiva, he will be pleased and my case will be dismissed from court.' This is his faith! People's faith has lost direction. Faith can also be channelled in the right direction. My guru, Swami Sivananda, used to say that helping others does not just mean that you are giving them medicine or clothes. The real meaning of helping others is that you are cleaning yourself. When you help someone, where does this act take place? It takes place in the mind, which becomes purified. It is only when your mind is pure and your mirror is clean that you will be able to see your face.

The one that you worship in the temple, in stone, in paper, is no one else but you. However, you aren't able to forget yourself; you aren't able to forget that you are an old woman, a shopkeeper, a businessman, an industrialist, or an employee. You won't be able to see yourself as God, because you are convinced that you are an old lady. That is why you worship Shiva, because you are convinced he is God. However, when your heart becomes clean, a mirror begins to shine and shows that the God in that rock is false, and that the truth is that He is no one else but you.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Vedas, the Upanishads and in countless holy books, this is what is written from beginning to end. Our religion says the same thing. I do not criticize worship of the form, for that is also one way. Gods, goddesses, asana, pranayama, meditation, concentration, self-control or whatever you do, that is a way. I do not criticize the path, but it is a path only, and not the destination. It is a means, not the end.

When we worship Shiva, Rama, Ganesha or Devi, we do so not as the means but as the end. It is necessary to do so. By believing them to be the goal, eventually their true nature is understood. We are unable to see the truth. Why? It is due

to an absence of affection, love, compassion and devotion: the affection that exists between brother and sister, the love between man and woman, the compassion that a happy man feels for an unhappy one, and the devotion that we feel for the power of God. Affection, love, compassion and devotion, the four of these soften life. The way iron melts when it is heated and can be given any shape; in the same way, to melt this hard heart, to soften it, these four are necessary.

Rabindranath Tagore had said, “Soften your prana with affection, love, compassion and devotion.” Here the word *prana* means your entire life, not the breath. Your prana is not soft, your life is not soft. If your children, spouse or close relatives were in pain, wouldn’t you worry about them? Of course you would, yet you would not care about your neighbours. If you heard about their problems, you would say, “Do you want me to call the doctor? Should I telephone him?” You may give money or lend him your car, you may do a lot of things, still you would not have the same feelings you would have for your spouse and children.

In Vedanta, to be able to see yourself in all living beings is called *atmabhava*. *Atmabhava* is explained in the *Ishavasya Upanishad*, the *Kathopanishad* and all the Upanishads. It is also written in the *Bhagavad Gita* (6:29):

*Sarvabhutasthamatmanam sarvabhutaani chaatmani;
Ikshate yogayuktaatma sarvatra samadarshanah.*

The impartial individual, immersed in yoga, sees all living beings in himself and himself in all living beings.

This is the way to *atmabhava*. However, it is very difficult to practise. Usually you think, ‘I have no connection to others; she is not my wife, he is not my son or my brother, he is not from my caste or religion, nor from my village, and I have nothing to gain from him.’

To feel the pain of another man in distress is possible only for the great souls. Their hearts are moved, *Sant hridaya navanita samana* – “A sage’s heart is as soft as freshly churned

butter.” An ordinary person’s heart is moved only by those they know and love, or those they have been friends with for years. If someone has obliged you in some way, then it is natural to care about that person. However, if you feel that way for someone who has never belonged to you, then that is *paropkara*, working for the welfare of others, and it purifies the soul.

Tulsi

When I came to Rikhia, I decided to make Tulsi the *ishta devi*, presiding goddess, of this place. I planted a tulsi plant here. She is the ruling goddess of this place. Just as a married woman maintains ties not only with her husband, but also with other male members of the family; someone is her brother and another is her nephew; in the same way, Tulsi is Devi Ma, Mother Goddess, to me. My guru mantra is different, my favourite god is Rama, and I worship all of them; I do not have any difficulty with that. I do not think too much or become too intellectual. Tulsi is the Devi Ma of this place for the simple reason that I want to remain healthy.

I have never been ill in my life. I have never had a cold, cough or fever. I have never taken any medicine although I have knowledge of all medicines. Now, I do not wish to miss even one day of my sadhana. If I have a cold and cough, I will not be able to perform my sadhana, and my *amushthana*, my resolution to practise, will be broken. Tulsi is the symbol of health; therefore, in the seven years that I have been in Rikhia I have not missed even one day of my practice. She is the mother of all medicinal plants. I pray to her only for health. Even if I die I will not be bothered, but falling ill, calling the doctor, taking medicine all the time is not good for a sannyasin. That goes against his stature. I am not at all afraid of dying; everyone has to die one day, no one can escape that. Death is certain, though sickness is not. It is not necessary that we must fall ill.

Now the question comes up, if you eat only once a day, if you eat pure and natural food, wake up and bathe on time,

how can you still fall sick? I have seen so many sattwic people who not only fell ill, but died of cancer. Even if they do not eat spicy food, eat pickles, drink tea or coffee, they fall sick and take medicines all their lives. So I thought to myself, 'You will not find any difference in spite of your sattwic life until you receive blessings. There is no guarantee that you will remain healthy only because of your sattwic life.' This is the reason why I established Tulsi as the presiding devi of Rikhia when I came to this place, and started her worship according to the rules.

One also needs to know whether Tulsi is effective or not. This depends on our faith. It is necessary to have shaligram along with Tulsi, but we did not have shaligram. I said, "That is fine. We will bring Tulsi, and shaligram will come by itself." We received bags of shaligram. A stranger sent them from Nepal, and a sackful has been stored. I understood then that the resolution of worshipping Tulsi was the right one.

There was only one problem before me; I should not miss even a day of my anushthana. The rule of this observance is that I would do a specified number of japa for a specified period of time every day. I had made a resolution to do this for five years. What was the practice? That there would be a fire in front, a fire at the back, a fire on my right, a fire on my left and the sun on top. The tradition calls it the *panchagni* sadhana, meaning five fires. This practice is done from the day of Makar Sankranti until Karka Sankranti, for six months in a year. This has to be undertaken by every paramahansa. After all, we are educated people who have lived in institutions, in society and visited places both here and overseas. We have dealt with money and land, wealth and rights, so we have incurred karma. The austerity to dissolve karma is panchagni. The old lifestyle has to be completely destroyed. Those who have stayed with kings and queens and in five-star hotels have to destroy everything; that is the reason for panchagni.

The sadhana of panchagni is such that on 14th January it feels good, as it is cold at that time. However, when the month of *Vaishakh*, roughly April or May, approaches the

temperature shoots up to forty-five, fifty or even sixty degrees Celsius; one day it even reached ninety degrees! There was fire on all sides and the Sun God was above. The possibility of dehydration always exists, and you know what happens if there is dehydration. However, nothing happened to me. God is very kind to me. Even so, I feel that the genetic build I inherited from my parents is excellent. I am a very good genetic specimen. I have never been ill. I have written many books on various illnesses and I know a lot about medicines, yet I have never experienced illness myself. Earlier, even if I was ill, it would not make much difference to me. I would just sleep for ten days, the doctor would visit, I would take medicines and be fine again. However, here I could not be sick during my sadhana. That is why I selected Tulsi Devi.

I could have chosen Ganesha, Chandi, Shiva or any other god or goddess. What was most important for me was not to get a cold, cough or headache for even a day, and that is very difficult at the age of sixty-five. It would be even more difficult for a man who has always led a five-star life. My room was air-conditioned with automatic temperature control. I cannot tolerate heat at all. I could not bear heat over twenty-five degrees. However, nothing happened to me during panchagni: no dehydration, no fever, no dysentery. I used to get sound sleep. Through God's grace, I used to sleep in the open on a cement platform. I wanted excellent health and Tulsi is the symbol of good health. She is the queen of all medicinal plants. I used to worship Tulsi and blow the conch every day before sunrise and before sunset.

The sound of conch

The sound of the conch has been researched. It destroys the disease-carrying germs over large areas. I believe this to be true. Gas or DDT does not kill everything; things can be destroyed by sound as well. The sound emanating from the conch or from my mouth is a wave. The sound waves are electrically charged. The thoughts produced in you, good or bad, are also electrically charged currents. This has been

measured. It is measured by EEG. There are four kinds of brain waves: alpha, beta, theta and delta. These are four kinds of electrical currents. Whenever sound is produced, whether by a conch, a flute or by mantra japa, that sound creates an electrical current. These electrically charged currents can make the surrounding environment germ-free. This was a very important discovery ten years ago. I water the Tulsi and blow the conch thrice in the morning and thrice in the evening. Thrice a year I replant it and once a year I perform its wedding, the time for which is fast approaching.

When do you replant it?

It is done once just before the rains start. Then again a little before the wedding, close to Kartik Poornima. Then the third time is sometime after December. There are rules written down in the *panchang*, the Indian almanac. We do it according to these rules. There is no superstition involved in this. Many people of other religions find it strange. I do not find it strange, as I understand it in a scientific way. The foundation of my faith is built on scientific thought and understanding. Therefore, I do not do this as superstition. I have understood the reasons and experienced the effects firsthand. That is why I am telling you this.

Every house should have Tulsi. Tulsi is an important element of our religion. Just as a brahmin is known by his tuft of hair and his sacred thread, similarly our religion is known by Tulsi and the cow. We should always think that if we have God's blessings we will be successful. This prevents pride. It is pride when I say that I never fall ill. I prayed to God that I should not fall ill for five years; after that, even if He takes me away, it will be fine. This means I have left all the work to God. I have removed the burden from my head. Swami Niranjana used to be very worried about me. He used to send me fifty to sixty coconuts every day. Since there are many coconut trees in Munger, he used to send truck-loads to me. If these were not available in Munger, he would call for them from Kolkata. I used to drink three

glasses of coconut water every day from Makar Sankranti until Karka Sankranti.

From Karka Sankranti until Makar Sankranti I had another anushthana. I had to repeat the mantra ten million, eight hundred thousand times during the year. This meant three hundred days at the rate of ten hours a day. Ten hours meant practically the whole day and during that time I had to keep *mouna*, silence. That is why I used to tell all of you not to come here. Many people used to feel upset about this, but it was necessary for the sadhana.

God's blessings

If you ever want to complete any work or finish an important task, you must accept God's help and attain God's blessings. Whether He is in the form of Ganesha or Tulsi or in any other form, I consider having His blessings far better than putting in hard work. That way you have to work very little, as half the work is done by Him! All you have to do is put in some effort and it is done. Last year when we had the program of Ramanaam Aradhana, we learnt from someone that a big storm was approaching from the Bay of Bengal. I tuned in to BBC that evening and BBC also said the same thing; this was the century's biggest storm and it was moving towards the north. I thought our program would be a big flop. There would be such heavy rain and people had come from all over the world; where would they stay and where would they eat? Ultimately I thought, 'Let it be.'

During this time, I read the panchang and it mentioned in there that it was *Vivah Panchami* on a particular day; it was Sita's wedding day. That gave me the answer; I found my missile! I said, "This time we will perform Sita's wedding. We will give a specified number of saris and bangles and a fixed amount of gold and silver as dowry." I informed everyone about it. Now, if it is Sita's wedding then Rama is also needed. We cannot have Sita's wedding without Rama. Rama arrived the very day on which I was reading the panchang. Someone brought him from Jaipur. I said, "Rama should not be alone, we will

perform his wedding.” The day I resolved to do so, that very night the storm changed its direction from north to east! Then it turned towards the south. I saw on BBC that the storm would at times turn towards the north, at times towards the south and sometimes towards the east. It had lost its way and just did not know where to go, almost as if the steering had gone haywire! In the end, the storm broke in Chennai and Sita’s marriage was performed here in a very nice manner. What I mean to say is, God’s strength can drive away all obstacles and hurdles, but only if you have sattwic faith.

Sita and Rama’s wedding

Every year we perform the wedding of Sita. This year it will be on 4th December and thousands of people will come from everywhere. On that day we will give dowry, since in India it is necessary to give dowry when a girl gets married. My daughter is plump and healthy. She will get a lot of good quality saris, wealth, gold or silver ornaments, diamonds and precious stones. The people of the village are very interested in all this. At this time, advanced souls like Swami Punyananda and Swami Nikhilatmananda will give satsang. Usually, the villagers do not get a chance to hear learned souls giving a talk. They have no means or facilities. They are poor people and cannot go to the city. They work during the day and come home in the evening. Small-time performers visit this place but renowned sadhus do not come here. However, in the last few years they have been getting this opportunity. Now people here even read the *Ramacharitamanas* as well as the *Hanuman Chalisa*, and this includes school children.

The program that we will have here will be according to the level of this place. Every place has a level. There are intellectual people in some places and emotional people in other places. A lot of people like stories. The people here do not like to hear about the vision of Rama, or his thoughts, or the philosophy. The story of Rama is important here. Shiva said to Parvati, *Sakala loka jaga pavani Ganga, puchehun Raghuapati katha prasanga* – “You have asked me to repeat the story of Rama, which is potent

enough to sanctify all the spheres even as the Ganga purifies the whole world.” The people here like hearing stories. Parvati, too, was interested in this. We only call those people here who are storytellers, not any others. For this, the villagers come in huge numbers and all the streets become full.

Last year, the Sikh ragis came here with their whole group. They brought the *Guru Granth Sahib* and enthroned it on the stage for three days. They read the whole book, and three of them sang kirtan. At the end, they distributed prasad which they made themselves. They brought ghee, flour, utensils and everything else along with them and they personally gave it to thousands of people. There was no disorderliness. Everyone used to sit peacefully when the prasad was being distributed. This was a good example for the villagers. They are poor people: labourers, farmers, carpenters, cobblers, leather-workers, and they too should get a chance to listen to uplifting stories. The singer Purushottam Jalota also came. He was very happy to be here.

As I said before, there is another significant aspect to this marriage celebration, that of giving dowry to Sita. We give everything a new bride would need as dowry. We do not give sweets, but we include things that a new bride would need. We make a bundle of it and store it. In this region, whichever bride goes ceremonially to her father-in-law's house is given all this. This is the rule. She is given a bridal suitcase costing a minimum of fifty to sixty thousand rupees. Jewellery, clothes, a suit for the boy, a watch and all the sixteen things needed for ornamentation are given. We actually give seventeen things, the seventeenth item being a sanitary towel, which is very important for the health of the women of the village. They use a dirty piece of cloth, which is unhealthy. After all,



she is my mother, my daughter, and I have to ensure her health. We used to do this earlier also, but now it has been included in Sita's wedding. Whatever will be offered to Sita is also their right. This is the wealth of the ladies. We would give it to all the girls of this village as well as to surrounding villages. Whatever assistance we can give, we do give. Not only that, if the husband was a milkman, we would give a cow. If he was a good farmer we would give him two bulls. If he distributed medicine, we would give a scooter. If the girl plans to continue with her studies after marriage, we would give her a bicycle. Ever since I have come here, all the girls have started studying. They have become so enthusiastic! I say this twenty-four hours of the day: the mother is the first guru. That is why it is necessary for the mother to be more knowledgeable, more understanding and more experienced than the father. If my guru is not educated herself, but is foolish and ignorant, how can I be well-educated?

A child is influenced by the mother until at least seven years of age. In these seven years, what does it learn from the mother? It will learn only if she knows something herself. If she only has lice in her hair, her son or daughter can learn only that from her. Therefore, it is extremely important for a mother to be learned and well-educated. It is not necessary for her to get a job; however, she must know how to read the *Ramayana* and perform pooja according to the rules. She must worship sattwic deities and devatas, not tamasic devatas. No ghosts, demons, black magic. This is like calling a ruffian to your house to protect you and tomorrow he attacks you himself. You should worship Rama, Shiva, Ganesha, Dattatreya, Tulsi, Peepal, Ganga, Yamuna, Himalaya, *Ramayana* or *Srimad Bhagavatam*. These are sattwic gods. There are various deities worshipped in the village: some are for black magic, some for burning down the house, some for making someone's son fall sick, and some for killing someone. Never do any of this, as you will suffer from the backlash. What is most important is your faith, your emotion and your relationship, which should be sattwic.

Satsang 9

18 September 1997



Shivalingam

Shivalingams exist at various places; however, there are only twelve recognized jyotirlingams. Shivalingams are not found only in India. In ancient times, Shivalingams were worshipped in the Roman culture as well. I have seen ancient Shivalingams in museums. Amongst these were crystal Shivalingams found on high mountain peaks. However, only the Hindus have followed the custom of worshipping the Shivalingam without interruption.

A jyotirlingam is a Shivalingam that has appeared at a particular place and not moved from there and a temple is established around it. It is also called a *swayambhulingam*. When a Shivalingam is brought from one place and established at another, it is simply called a Shivalingam. Shivalingams are found in central India on the Narmada and the Gomati rivers. The stones in these areas are in the shape of Shivalingams.

The worship of Lord Shiva is a very ancient practice. Historically, for a very long time many people did not accept Shiva. After all, his place of residence is the graveyard. After the death of his first wife, he got married a second time. He takes drugs like ganja and hashish, cannabis, he smears his body with the ashes of burnt dead bodies, uses snakes and scorpions as ornaments, and gets very angry. He even protects the evil beings. He was the one who gave boons to a demon like Ravana! He created so many problems for others! That is why for a long time many people did not accept Shiva.

The Vaishnavas would not allow worshippers of Shiva to enter their temples. Almost eight hundred years ago, one of Swami Sivananda's ancestors, Appaya Dikshitar, was not allowed entry into the famous South Indian Temple of Tirupati because he was a worshipper of Shiva. Later, however, circumstances changed. Devotees of Shiva are very open-hearted. You can put anyone in Shiva's temple, whether it be Rama, Krishna or Devi. Shiva is not concerned with his devotee's personal life, his customs and practices or his thoughts and beliefs. He says, "Whatever you give me, I will return a thousand-fold to you." A devotee of Shiva need not be a vegetarian, possess a good soul, be from a high caste, rich, clean or pure. They can belong to any caste, be a prostitute, a thief or a hunter, it makes no difference. They need only have faith and belief.

The Puranas tell the story of a hunter who went hunting in the jungle. By sunset he still had not found any prey. Night fell and it was too dark to return home. There was the danger of tigers and cheetahs in the jungle, so the hunter climbed up a tree to spend the night there. Still, he was petrified that

if he fell asleep he would fall from the tree. To stop himself from falling asleep, he began to pluck leaves from the tree one at a time, and dropped them down. Before sunrise Lord Shiva appeared before him and asked, "What boon do you want?" The hunter said, "I do not want anything, I was only trying to drive off sleep." Lord Shiva said, "However, now I've come so you will have to ask for something."

That foolish hunter did not want devotion, liberation, wealth or property, a car or a bungalow, or anything at all. He said, "Give me a deer, otherwise what will I feed my children?" Lord Shiva said, "So be it." When the hunter came down he saw that there was a black stone in the shape of a lingam and the tree he was sitting on was a bael tree. He had been plucking bael leaves and offering them to the Shivalingam all night long. People say that offering even one bael leaf to Lord Shiva is enough to receive his grace. It is very easy to please him; however, it is very difficult to please a Vaishnava devata. You will have to be a vegetarian, you will have to take a bath and cleanse yourself before you start your worship, you will have to avoid garlic and onion and pay attention to purity, you will have to pay attention to a lot of things.

Faith and belief is the only path to reach God. The worship conducted in temples and churches is fine in its own way, but if you have faith alone it is enough. Then you do not need to worship God externally.

The Shivalingam at Baidyanath Dham has a strange history. It is believed that Ravana was carrying it back from Kailash to establish it in his capital city. However, the condition attached to this was that he should not put the Shivalingam down on the ground on the way; it should only be held in the hand. While passing through the area of Baidyanath Dham, Ravana felt like urinating. He gave the Shivalingam to a brahmin boy to hold, started urinating and went on doing so. That brahmin boy got tired of holding the Shivalingam in his hand and finally put it down on the ground, from where it did not move ever again. This is the story of the Baidyanath Dham Shivalingam.

Samkhya philosophy

After leaving his home, Lord Buddha came to the banks of the Ganga, where he met his guru who was a Samkhya yogi. Buddha learnt Samkhya yoga from him, yet Buddha was not satisfied with his learning. He thought, “There is a difference between knowledge and experience. Knowledge means knowing something, but to actually experience it is of far greater importance.” Buddha did not just want to gain knowledge of the elemental reality; he wanted to experience it also. That is why he chose the path of ascetic practice. Finally, in Bodhgaya, he attained enlightenment.

The Samkhya philosophy does not believe in God. There is no mention of God anywhere in it. The propounder of Samkhya philosophy was Kapila Muni, the son of Devhuti. Samkhya has elaborated on duality. The Advaita philosophy believes in only one element; Samkhya believes in two. This is the difference between non-duality and duality. Rama-Sita, Shiva-Parvati, Radha-Krishna: all these pairs worshipped today are based on duality, which is similar to the Samkhya philosophy. The only difference in Samkhya is that it does not believe in God. The way devotion is perceived in the Shaiva and Vaishnava sects is influenced by Samkhya. The two main elements in Samkhya are Prakriti and Purusha. These two are eternal and creation exists because of them. In the thirteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* (13:19), it has been said:

*Prakritim purusham chaiva viddhyanaadi ubhaavapi;
Vikaaraamshcha gunaamshchaiva viddhi prakritisambhavaan.*

Know you that Nature and Spirit are beginningless;
and know also that all modifications and qualities are
born of Nature.

Purusha is innocent and formless, *nirdoshan hi saman Brahman*, but Prakriti has eight feet: the five elements of ether, air, fire, water and earth, plus mind, intellect and ego. This is the eightfold Prakriti that Sri Krishna talked about in the *Bhagavad Gita* (7:4):

*Bhoomiraapo'nalo vaayuh kham mano buddhireva cha;
Ahamkaara itiyam me bhinnaa prakritirashtadhaa.*

Sri Krishna also goes on to say, *Apareyamitastvanyam prakritim viddhi me param* – “The unmanifest Prakriti, Nature, is higher than the manifest Prakriti.” Manifest nature is made up of the sun, moon, stars, and so on, whereas unmanifest nature has to be experienced. This concept of unmanifest nature does not exist in Samkhya.

What we can see with our eyes and sense through our nose or ears is indirect. What is perceived through the mind is also indirect. The knowledge gained through the senses is indirect knowledge. The only form of direct knowledge is what is seen without the senses. This is called *darshan*. Knowledge is one thing; you read a book and you understand everything. However, experience is something else altogether. I give you a book on rasagullas. You read in the book that rasagullas are delicious; they are sweet and made of chenna. Yet, until you actually eat one, how will you experience its taste? There is a difference between knowledge and experience. Kabirdas says:

Too kehtaa kaagaja kee lekhi; mai kehtaa aankhana dekhee.

You say what is written on paper. I say what I've seen with my own eyes.

In order to understand Samkhya, the best book to read is the *Ramacharitamanas*. In this book, Rama is the symbol of the supreme man, Sita is the symbol of the divine power of illusion and Ravana is the symbol of the ten senses. Every sense perception has a positive and a negative aspect. In a way, the collection of the senses is the biggest terrorist. We are all harassed by the senses. Ravana is the symbol of these terrorist senses.

In reality, the world is one. Radha is Krishna and Krishna is Radha. The gopis are the senses and the *rasalila* is the dance of creation. Those who wish to see the sweetness and beauty of Samkhya must read the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and the *Ramayana*.

Satsang 10

19 September 1997



Why are all the important temples situated in remote places? Why weren't they built in places where people could access them easily?

After all, if God is beyond our reach, His temples should also be beyond our reach! In India, the reason temples are built in such places is that temples are not built just with money. You think you have one million dollars and so much land, so you

will just build a temple? No, a temple is not built this way. There should be a magnetic force, a divine vibration, in the places where temples are built. The stone of the idol is not God. There is a force within the idol. Every idol, whether of Shiva, Kali or Ganesha, has a force within it. If there is a force then build a temple. This is the first rule for building a temple.

There are many places on earth which, for some reason, have a particular force or vibration. It may be because it is the site of a great soul's samadhi, or someone may have done some ascetic practice there, or when God incarnated on earth He may have done something there. There is a reason why one place has more energy than another place. In the same way that you can notice a difference between people, someone is very intelligent and another is very foolish, you can also be aware that one place is ordinary and another is special. Temples are built at such special places. Someone experiences the vibrations and is given the command to build a temple there. This is the main reason to determine where temples are erected. There must have been a great soul who had carried out some kind of worship and who died there. A temple dedicated to the devi or devata who was worshipped in that place is built. These are the reasons for building temples. Then, there is the *thakurbadi*. That's a small temple in your house where you perform daily worship. You do not need anything for that.

A temple is a special place, yet it is not personal. This is true of not only of Hindus, but Catholic churches and Muslim mosques are also not considered to be personal places; rather, they are social places. There are many mosques and churches built over a saint's residence, for example, Nizammuddin Aulia in Delhi. There are so many places in Bihar where a mosque was built over the residence of a mahatma and people started saying their prayers there. Our important temples and spiritual centres are all centres of energy. In India, there are sixty-four places dedicated to Devi and twelve centres dedicated to Shiva. Besides these, the Vaishnava sect has its own places, like Dwarkadheesh, where Mirabai merged

into light, or Jagannath Puri, where Chaitanya Mahaprabhu merged into light. A temple is, therefore, a place of worship and also a place where you experience energy.

Now, the question arises as to why many temples are built in remote places. If you think about it, where is the difficulty? If you leave Rishikesh in the morning, you will reach Yamunotri by evening. It is only half a day's journey. Where is the problem? It takes half a day for you to reach Kolkata from Rikhia. If you say, "This is the situation now; it used to be different earlier," you are mistaken. Even then, to travel from Rikhia to Kolkata was just as difficult. In those days, you had to climb a mountain and cross the Ganga by boat. Everyone had to face difficulty. It was as difficult for people from Kolkata to reach Bihar as it was for Biharis to reach Kolkata and for people from Rishikesh to go to Yamunotri. Whether you went to Rameshwar or Gangotri or Kolkata, it was difficult everywhere. Today, the amenities are just the same. You take a taxi at four o'clock in the morning from Rishikesh and you reach Yamunotri at six in the evening, or you stay overnight at Ganesh Chatti and go to Yamunotri the next morning, have darshan and return to Rishikesh by evening. A pilgrimage to Yamunotri can be done in two days. You can visit all four dhams in five days. How can you say this is difficult?

Earlier, there were problems everywhere, not just in Yamunotri. The people of Madhya Pradesh used to visit Somnath. Mirabai went all the way from Chittor to Mathura-Vrindavan. It must have been so far, so difficult, and taken her so many days. What must she have eaten and drunk on the way, where must she have slept? This happened five hundred years ago. A young girl, the daughter-in-law of a royal family, how must she have reached there? She must have faced some difficulty. Just measure the distance of Chittor, the road from Chittor to Vrindavan. How long is it and how many days would it have taken her to get there? It is a road through the desert. You have to climb on a camel, walk some of the way and stop at heights. You meet all kinds of people.

After that, she left Vrindavan and went to Dwarka, which is even further away. Finally she said, *Gunjanvana chhaari re, kahaan jaun Ghanashyama* – a tired and dejected woman is saying, “Oh, Ghanshyam! Where do I go now?” What could have happened to make her leave Vrindavan? History does not reveal this at all. History only talks of all the good and sweet stories about Mira. What was Mira’s situation at the palace and in Vrindavan?

When Mirabai went to Saurashtra, she sang bhajans in their language. In Gujarat she would sing in the Gujarati language. Mirabai knew many languages. All this is not a part of history. I know that she knew Hindi, Braj, Avadhi, Punjabi and Gujarati. She definitely knew Marwari and all the languages from Rajasthan. She has written bhajans in all languages.

Mirabai faced difficulties. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu also faced many difficulties. In his time, it was so difficult to reach any place of pilgrimage. The person who wants no difficulties will never be able to go anywhere. The path to success is like climbing a mountain; you do not find success in your pocket. Everyone has to struggle.

Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri, Yamunotri and other places of pilgrimage were very famous at one time. There used to be a lot of people living in these places, including kings and saints. Only Kumaon and Garhwal were in Uttarkhand because these people’s hearts are different. Even today, all those who go for sadhana and sannyasa only go to Uttarkhand. Does anyone from here go to South India for sannyasa? Does anyone go to Gujarat or Madhya Pradesh? Whenever you wish to take sannyasa, what will you think of? Haridwar or Rishikesh. If you wish to go on a pilgrimage, you will go to these places, as the river Ganga is there.

The Ganga is India’s sushumna nadi. The rishis and learned men wrote all the Puranas, the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and other holy books on the banks of the Ganga. Shankaracharya has written very clearly, *Bhagavati tava teere nirmaatraashano’ham* – “Oh Devi, Oh Mother, I am

taking your blessings by sitting on your banks and drinking your water.” The Ganga has the power to improve the mind. You begin thinking of the Brahma Sutras and of Lord Rama. The Himalayas are sacred land. The kings of these places used to give shelter to sadhus and mahatmas. Giving shelter did not mean they had to perform the marriage ceremonies of their daughters. It was enough to give them four rotis at 10 am. When we went to Gangotri, we would carry our *khappars*, begging bowls. We would go to any house and the householders would give us two rotis and some vegetables, which we used to eat while sitting somewhere. It was a beautiful place. We should never say that it is an inaccessible place, because nothing is inaccessible.

At one point in time, the Himalayas were not only full of greenery and abundance, but were a well-populated kingdom as well. Parvati’s father was its king. His name was Himalaya. Her father was not some mountain. In earlier times, every country and mountain used to have an administrator, just as these days irrigation and other departments have administrators. If it is mentioned somewhere that one lake came from Madhya Pradesh, three lakes came from Gujarat and three mountains came from Chennai, it does not refer to lakes or mountains; rather, it means that the kings came from these places. Rama called the ocean. Who was the ocean? It was a man who ruled over the ocean. When he refused to come, Rama became angry with him and only then did he come. This does not mean a man came out of the waters. You must think in an appropriate manner.

Parvati was born in the Himalayas, in Kumaon. Her birthplace is called Gaura Village. That is why we say Parvati hails from Kumaon. Kankhal, which is close to Haridwar, is where King Daksha performed a yajna in which Sati immolated herself. For this reason, Kankhal has been a highly populated place. These days, people from the villages are slowly leaving and coming down to cities like Bareilly in search of work. Many younger people are coming down, and only old people are left in the villages. This happens everywhere.

When the population changes, the whole structure of society also changes.

There must have been someone to support all the learned and spiritually advanced men who wrote such vast holy books. It is a proven fact that all these books, as well as the commentaries on these books, were written in the Himalayas. Vyasa wrote his works in Badrinath. Shankaracharya's caves are located on the Saraswati, a little beyond Badrinath. The gurukuls of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna were all located in the Himalayas. At a distance of sixteen kilometres from Rishikesh, on the banks of the Ganga, are the Vasishtha Caves where Vasishtha used to live. Shatrughna used to live on Muni ki Reti next to the Sivananda Ashram. Bharata used to stay in Rishikesh, where the city is located today. Lakshmana used to live on the other side of the river, on the far side of Lakshmana Jhula. All these princes used to live at different locations. There were appropriate arrangements for them. They used to go to study; in those days, there were large gurukuls. This is not today's situation. This was prevalent in the Treta Yuga, thousands of years ago. To ask why the structures of that time are not found today is not the right way of thinking.

I have stayed overnight in the Vasishtha Caves. I did not go there to experience it, but only to see it. Lions and tigers visit it at night. We lit a fire outside and had a bath in the Ganga. This is where Sage Vasishtha used to live. Swami Ramatirtha used to live a little further down in the Brahmapuri Cave. It is right on the riverbank. At first his name was Tirtharama and after taking sannyasa it became Ramatirtha. Sannyasa is the opposite of the life of a householder. Ramatirtha was a different kind of person, a follower of Vedanta, yet very emotional and sensitive. He was very simple, not cunning.

The nearer a thing is to you, the less is its value, and what is far away becomes more valuable. If Badrinath was close by, we would not even care to think about it. Since it is so far, we are discussing it. *Ali parichayaadavajnaa* – “What is close to us is less valuable.” That is why it is better if it is far away.

Satsang 11

20 September 1997



When you do something good for others then you are doing good for yourself. If you abuse someone, in effect, you are abusing yourself. If you hate someone, it means you hate yourself. If you love someone, it means you love yourself. If you help someone, you are helping yourself. These principles are followed by every religion, including Christianity and Hinduism, and are found in modern science as well. Whatever you do for others, you are doing for yourself.

When you do social service in the villages, do not think that you are doing any kind of social work; rather, you should

think you are doing a spiritual practice. This is the truth. While doing such service, you come in contact with different people, you come to know and understand the thousands of years of history of other cultures.

True representatives of history

Modern people are not the true representatives of ancient history. The people from villages, untouched by today's culture, are the real representatives of the progress of human culture. These people have safeguarded the entire history of the hereditary structure, opinions and beliefs of humankind. They have faith in some high, unseen force even though they may not do japa, yoga or any other spiritual practice. They wake up in the morning, do the necessary housework like cleaning the cattle shed, milking the cows, washing utensils and bathing the children. After that, they go out to work as labourers, masons or sweepers. They return in the evening, eat their food and go to sleep. They do not know any spiritual practice. However, once in a while during their festivals, they pray, perform worship, all day long and enjoy themselves, and they don't go to work at all.

These people do not believe in having just a couple of children. The women are happy when they have many children. The family is proud of women with many children. The children's marriage is an occasion of the greatest happiness for the family. When they come to know that a woman is pregnant, they celebrate. When somebody dies, they perform some service in memory of the departed. In India, for fifteen days after a soul departs, people perform a *shraadhha*, a ceremony with pooja and so on, in honour of the departed soul. This is done for mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, great grandmother, great grandfather, for all those who die in battle, and for those who are missing. This is done by all families; no one can change this. Those who have migrated to America and Europe, who have studied and worked there and are now settled there, they also take part in this.

I was introduced to the hustle and bustle of life at the age of eight. My father was employed in the police force and my mother was busy with Mahatma Gandhi's movement. I was the eldest in the family; we owned a substantial amount of land and were quite wealthy. We had fifteen hundred acres of agricultural land and one thousand acres of forest land. Two rivers flowed through our land and we had to look after these as well. This land was given to our ancestors as a reward. Our ancestors were warriors; they would go to battle and die there, and we were given the land as a reward. It was forbidden to sell the land given as a reward; it also cannot be transferred or divided. This land would be in my name even today, until such time it is declared in court that I have died. When I die, my other brother will get the title to it; if not him, then his eldest son.

Nobody used to work in our house; nevertheless I started work at the age of eight. On Saturdays, since it was a school holiday, I would go to the village. My maternal grandmother lived there. She was illiterate, yet she knew a lot about land and property, and would share her knowledge with me. She had agricultural land, fifty to sixty bulls, twenty-five to thirty cows, horses, and one hundred and fifty sheep which lived in the forest. We were the contractors for extracting gum out of the rubber trees in our forests. I had to check whether or not the people were using the right trees for the contract; rascals can be found everywhere. I also had to ensure the trees were not cut in an underhanded way. I would put on my boots, carry a rifle and stride around all over the place making sure people were doing their work, whether it was constructing buildings, working in the fields, or any other kind of work. That is how I learnt to lead others.

First world tour

I never even dreamt of establishing an ashram. Never for even a moment did I think of going overseas. Everything just happened on its own. Once, I had a big program in Mumbai which was inaugurated by the governor. A high ranking

officer of the Tata company was also present. He wanted me to inaugurate the new Tata fertilizer factory, set up near Dwarka. He had also arranged for me to travel in the Tatas' private plane.

In the aeroplane, I was sitting on the seat next to the pilot. In my younger days, I had learnt how to fly an airplane at the Lucknow Flying Club. I hadn't completed the full course; with the impetuosity of youth, I had only learnt for a couple of months. After a while, I asked the pilot seated next to me what his name was. I remembered that name from my days at the flying club. I gave my previous name to him and asked, "Did you know someone by this name?" He answered, "Yes." I said, "That's me." Upon hearing that, he said, "Then you should take over the controls." I said, "No, I've forgotten everything." However, he left the controls and said, "Now only you are in charge of it."

As I took hold of the controls, I suddenly got a clear glimpse of the future. I could see the entire scene passing before my eyes: taking the flight to the West, meeting different people there and giving lectures at various places. At that very moment I decided to go overseas. I returned to Mumbai that very day and asked an acquaintance to arrange for my passport. He arranged for my passport within twenty-four hours and quickly booked two round-the-world tickets; my secretary was also with me. Within fifteen days, we departed India! What would you call this if not God's grace? I did not put any effort in at all. Within fifteen days we were in Singapore; after that, we visited Australia, the Philippines, Japan, America, Europe, and returned in ten months.

When I went on my first trip overseas, my secretary did not know anything; what a visa was, where to go, how to go; we were both totally ignorant. If I'd ever thought of going overseas, then I might have known these things. There were a lot of restrictions in those days, for example, we were not permitted to take foreign currency overseas, but there were fewer rules for visas. We could visit Australia without a visa, and in Germany it was not even necessary to show

your passport. At that time there was not much pressure of foreign immigrants in the western countries. It has increased now. There weren't so many restrictions in Muslim countries either; there were more restrictions in the Socialist and Communist countries like Russia.

Many people who leave India and go to other countries do not want to return; they feel there are many amenities there. Such a thought never crossed my mind. Whenever I went out of India, I never felt it was home. I never thought, 'I will stay overseas and permanently settle there.' Many people used to suggest this, yet I would just laugh it off. The western lifestyle doesn't appeal to me. I like to live in my own way. We cannot live there according to our style; we have to live, eat and speak in their way. Here we can live the way we like.

God's will

I never gave any thought to the things that I have achieved and received in my life. I had left my home and family with just one aim. I had met a tantric yogini who had given me the experience of *shaktipat*, an energetic experience transmitted from guru to disciple, and I wanted to have those experiences again. I had not gone to the ashram to do karma yoga. I had never thought of writing books and typing them out. I only wanted to sit somewhere and perform my spiritual practice, learning from a guru who would reveal everything to me. I know now that it is not possible; the spiritual path is not that easy.

Whatever a person is to achieve and receive, he will do so without ever having thought about it. Whatever is in his destiny he is sure to get, whether he does something about it or not. People exert themselves a great deal and worry too much. They get very disturbed. The amount of water that can fill your pot will depend on its size; it cannot hold more than its capacity.

Whenever I went to other countries, I was sent there by God. I didn't go there because I wished to go. Every person has his individual nature. My nature is such that I have

never wanted to earn money. I have total faith that if I want money, it will come. I have never felt the worry, 'If I don't have money, what will I do?' When I decided to implement the plan for Ganga Darshan, I said, "The money will come; there is no need to worry." The one hundred and eight rupees that my guru Swami Sivananda had given me when I left the ashram are still with me. I only went on adding zeros to that amount.

I do not want to worship God in order to ask for wealth, knowledge, or anything else. Why beg from God? I have made a request to God only once, and he has fulfilled my prayer. At that time I was feeling very dejected, otherwise, why ask God for anything? You should ask from someone who is not omnipresent. It is possible that God is sitting within, thinking and speaking through us. It is difficult to say.

While the thought of money never entered my mind, I have had money. Before I left home, I had to give my father an authority letter for tax and other purposes. Along with that, I gave him my Post Office Pass Book which contained savings of ten thousand rupees, about three thousand dollars back then. My father saw that and asked, "Have you committed a theft or robbery?" I said, "Not a theft. I have worked." The ten thousand rupees in those days is equal to hundreds of thousands of rupees today. We could get seven kilos of sugar for one rupee and now you get one kilo for ten rupees.

When I went to Rishikesh, it was the same story. At that time I used to earn three thousand rupees every day; I am talking about the years 1944 to 1945. People in Rishikesh were envious of me. The pandit who had prepared my horoscope had said I would be a pauper, someone who would bring an end to the family lineage, and a loafer as well. All three things turned out to be true; however, he did not know that when iron comes in contact with a touchstone, it turns to gold.

The guru's company and the guru's touch does not change a person's destiny, but its meaning changes. I am a pauper

even today. I have never opened an account in any bank, nor have I ever signed a cheque or counted any money. I have even brought an end to the family lineage. Since I have never married, how can there be any children? I was also a loafer, sometimes in Rishikesh and sometimes elsewhere; I never stayed in one place. I might go away from here as well, I can't say. Leaving a place is not an important thing. To build and grow something is difficult; you need to put effort in and sweat it out. However, you do not need to do anything much to leave; you just have to make a decision and leave, hold on to your loincloth and step out. However, people find that difficult, as they enjoy accumulating things.

These days I do talk to people, yet I never give them spiritual guidance as there are rules for paramahansa sadhana. However, let me tell you this much: every person has ups and downs in life. Whether the enjoyment or wealth is for accumulation or for use, for knowledge or for liberation, nothing happens through impatience and haste. Whatever has to happen will happen. This has been my experience in life. Therefore, if you desire God, sadhana, liberation or anything else, no matter how much you strive for these, just give up worry, anxiety and agitation. In spiritual life nothing happens without the wish of God, even though you may try to find thousands of solutions. It is said that no matter how hard a person strives, without the grace of God, you cannot get the grace of God.

I have learnt only one secret of the spiritual path: give up feeling disturbed and be content with whatever you have received from God. Get up in the morning, remember God for some time, do satsang: these are essential in human life. However, whatever you desire from the spiritual path you will not attain through human effort. You will not attain that result through any amount of hard work that you put in. You will get that only if He wishes to give it to you. If He feels like it, you will receive it. If He does not wish it, you will not receive it. No one has any right or control over this process. No one even knows what God's grace is. If He wishes, He will

give you an experience, a *darshan* or vision, or a spiritual life. Otherwise, you can go on flailing your arms and legs; nothing is going to happen.

If we have an illness and we do yoga or find some other remedy for it, isn't that God's wish?

All that is fine. Effort is necessary for material things. Sickness, suffering, mental problems, children, marriage, all these are material things. However, what are spiritual things? Receiving the grace of God, experiencing God's energy or strength, or attaining the vision of God. The rules for these are different. All other things you can attain through yoga.

How would we know that this is God's wish and nothing else?

This is not something you can ask about; when you get it you will know. No one needs to be told that neem is bitter. How do you know bitterness or sweetness? How do you know that chillies are spicy? You automatically know all this. In the same way, God's wish is very clear, and if you have a doubt in your mind as to whether it is God's wish or your own then you should understand that it is your wish, not that of God.

Why does it happen sometimes that you love someone at home very dearly, but due to some incident your love diminishes?

Love and hate are two sides of the same coin. The one who loves, also hates. There is a love-hate relationship between mother and child, husband and wife. This is especially true of those with weak minds.

If you love someone and later your love decreases, what is wrong with that? If your love reduces, it is a good thing; at least you are free. Love is a net that traps you. In the same way that a fish gets caught in the net, love is a net that traps you. If this love lessens for some time, then consider it to be a good thing. At least for some time you will be free. Lack of love is good for a person's spiritual life. So many people feel that love is a bond or fetter. If someone is just not used to living without it then that is a different matter.

Progress through struggle

Those who are not ambitious, who have no aspiration to achieve things in life, will never struggle. If such people get two rotis, they will eat these and go off to sleep. There are rogues also; whether they need it or not, they will loot another's house or shop. It is a habit with them. You will see a lot of people like that in the world. They move from one place to another. As far as civilization goes, wherever there is heat, there are always rivers to supply water, and life is very easy in such places. There are no problems, no struggle. However, in places where there is no water and it is extremely hot or cold, people have to struggle hard. The people in Europe have to strive hard otherwise they will get pneumonia in just one night, it is so cold there!

In the upper region of Greenland, you do not need stones to build houses. Huge houses are built on pillars made from pieces of ice that never melt. The ice is so strong that it seems the house is built out of the mountainside. You will find a lot of seals there that are killed and thrown on the roof. They never rot; it is like keeping them in the fridge. Whenever they have the need, they cut them up, grill them over a burning fire, drink alcohol and eat them. You also need to wear a lot of clothes there. They have never heard of a bath. If a person has a bath there every day, he will die due to the extreme cold.

In a cold country, you need hot water to have a bath and you need to always keep warm, otherwise you will catch pneumonia. In earlier times, even in Europe, the practice of having a bath did not exist. Tibetans have a bath once a year. I am talking about ordinary people, not those living in big houses with heaters. The ordinary folk in villages do not change their clothes. I remember my childhood: we would sleep in the same clothes we had worn during the day, then we would wear them to school the next morning and go to play in them also. At the end of winter, after Basant Panchami, we would wash and dry the clothes and put them away.

The people who have struggled have also conquered the world. They travelled far and wide in search of warmth,

grazing lands, agricultural lands and forests, and they had to fight with the inhabitants of those lands. If the inhabitants were strong, they could defend their territory and survive; otherwise, they would have to flee from there. People living in forests are satisfied with just a chicken; they are not concerned with anything else. Who is going to take the trouble of making roti, dal, curry and pakori? People living in jungles lead a simple life. Those whose lives are simple are not hard-working by nature, which is why they remain less advanced. Many of the *adivasis* or tribal people in the world are less advanced. They live in the jungles and have meagre crop cultivation. However, without exception, all those who have come from difficult circumstances have been hard-working.

If you go to Mongolia, it is so cold that you cannot have a bath, you cannot change your clothes and you have to wear thick clothes. People from Mongolia and Afghanistan came to India and settled here with ease. Here you can manage with wearing just a dhoti, which is why there are fewer struggles here. When people have had to struggle, they have advanced. In Europe, if the electricity cuts out, they will not even be able to gargle or go out of their house. In England and Paris, it rains for twenty-five days in a month and the weather clears up for just three to four days, and even then, only for half the day. On such days, people leave their offices and come out to enjoy the good weather.

The reason people in India have not advanced is because they have never had to struggle. In the evening after farming the land, they collect small pieces of wood from here and there to start a fire and their food is ready. That is all they need. The villagers cook outdoors, except for two months during the rainy season. In India, this is the only struggle. However, people from other countries have prospered; they came to India, spread all over the world.

A person must have desire and ambition. Some people are content with what they have and all they want is to eat and sleep. The people from olden times were like this. People from areas such as Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Tripura, Nagaland,

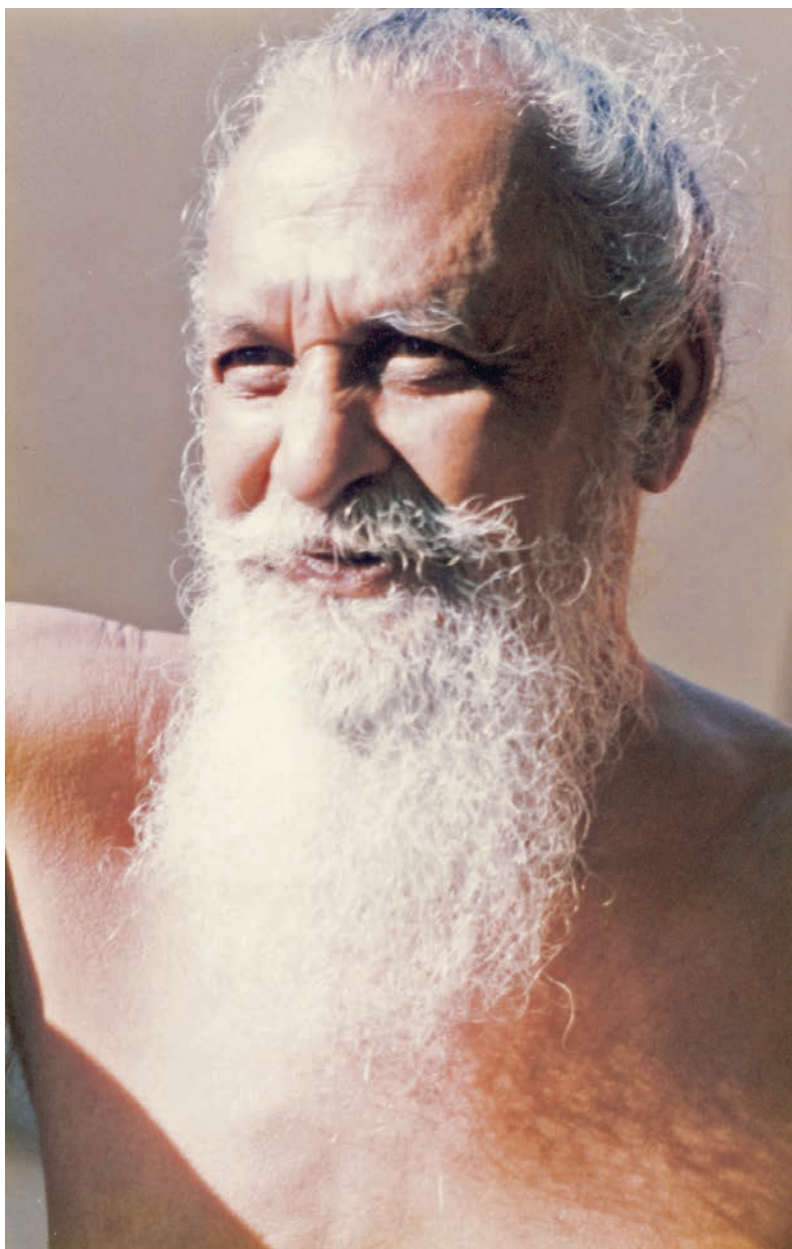
are not progressive. They will dress, eat and maintain their houses according to their own style, and they are very proud of this. However, this is not good for any culture. Those who live only by their own style become limited. People from Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Gujarat and Punjab are the exact opposite; they are very progressive.

Every culture must venture out from its own customs and practices and appreciate that they can wear different kinds of clothes, eat other food and get married in a different manner as well. During the farming season in the regions of Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya or Tripura, thirty to forty men from the village start working in one part of the field. They do not say, "This is your land and that is mine." Working all together, they plough and sow all the land in the village and all the work is completed at one time. Only at the time of reaping does each one tend to his own land. That means that labour is collective and reaping is individual. The land holding of each individual is recorded.

In Meghalaya, the shops are run by women and the men play cards and look after the children, the way women do here. There are small communities in Meghalaya called Khundas that consist of five to ten thousand people. There are a number of these communities, such as Khasi and Turra. They celebrate marriages, worship various gods and goddesses, and celebrate agricultural festivals. These are people who enjoy life. The thought of starting an institution, office or factory, or acquiring degrees like BA and MA, or going to the High Court or Supreme Court never enters their minds. However, in respect to matters regarding boys and girls, they are like Europeans. The women are very active there. When you go towards Assam you find a matriarchal society, not a patriarchal one. The women all seem very energetic; the men don't do much work. Women do the work of men and vice versa.

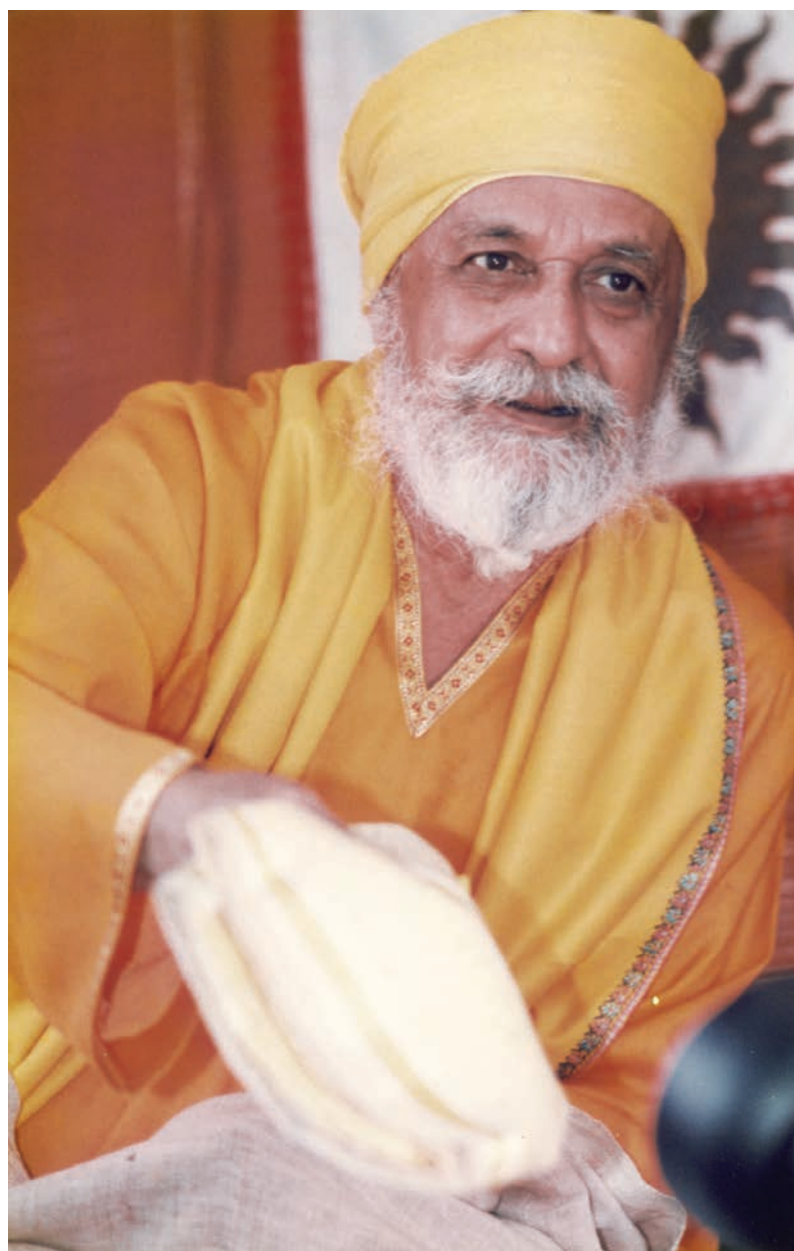




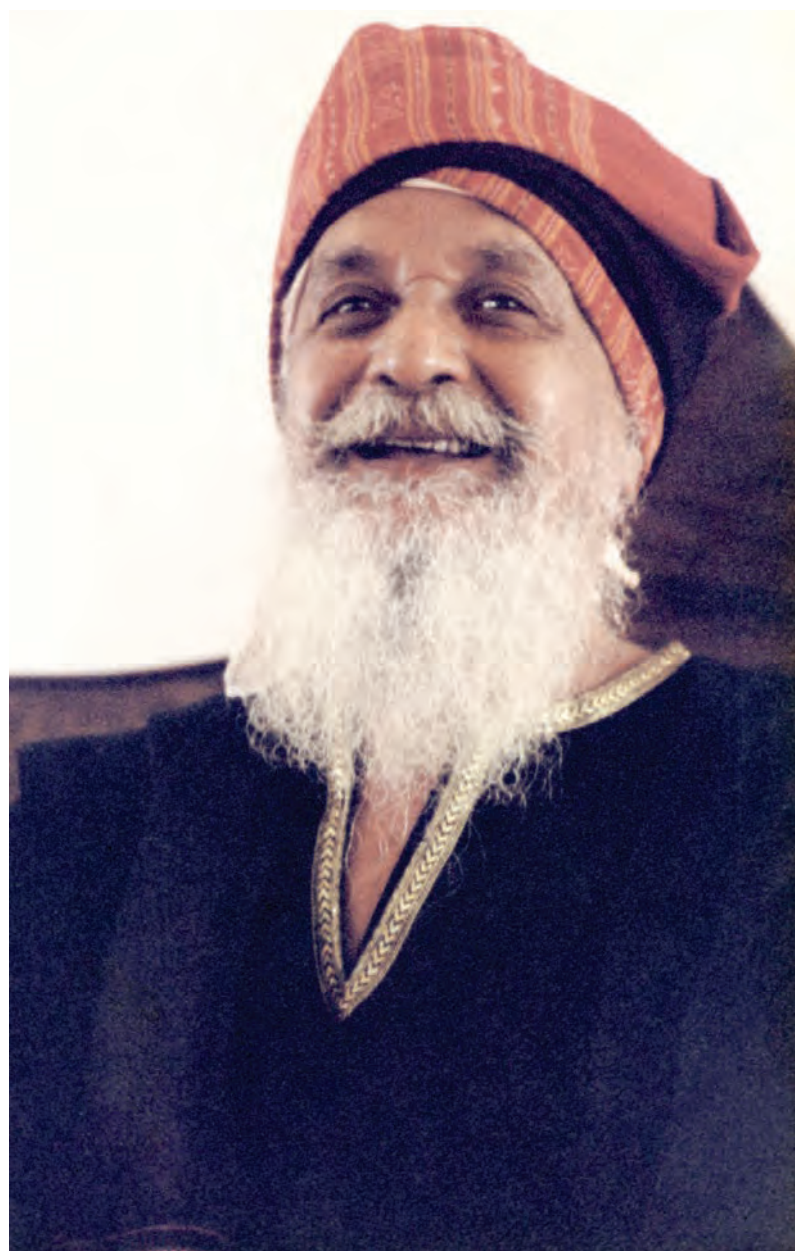












Satsang 12

21 September 1997



When Shiva's wife, Sati, turned her body to ashes by offering it to the fire, how did Shiva then roam around with her body?

After being burned, a person's body doesn't necessarily destroy completely. In India, the custom of *sati*, self-immolation upon the death of a husband, has been prevalent for a long time. When Pandu died, Madri became a sati. When Dasharatha died, his three queens wanted to become satis, but Bharata prevented them from carrying it out. This custom existed in the great and famous families of the upper classes of society. It was not followed by the general public, for example, sati was unheard of amongst the farmers, labourers and masons.

It was unheard of even amongst the *Brahmins*, the priestly caste. It was more common among the *kshatriya* or warrior caste, as kshatriyas died in larger numbers. It also existed among the *vaishyas*, the trade and service caste. If a vaishya were to die and his wife remarried, she would leave with all the wealth! The real reason behind all this was not religion, but something completely different.

Don't you think that the contribution of women towards making an enduring society is far greater? We can see in our society that women have had to make many sacrifices.

I have thought about this many times; however, the problem is that there are some unique conditions and situations women encounter, which would not be the case with men. A woman is never a hunter, she is always the hunted. She has always been targeted due to philosophical or psychological reasons, due to inferior physical prowess or her role in society. If a woman has a baby in her womb or on her lap, what can she do? Although a certain amount of physical exercise is necessary, if she wrestles or does too many difficult sit-ups, her womb may be affected and she may have difficulty bearing children. Those men who exercise rigorously, perform difficult sit-ups, go to battle and do horse riding have hard flesh and bones in their bodies. A womb should be as flexible as a balloon. If physical activity that is too rigorous compromises her reproductive system, how will she keep the child in her womb? If she exercises in an inappropriate way, wrestles, does intense sit-ups and push-ups, jumps up and down and does all the exercises done by men, her system may become compromised and her body unable to bear a child.

What about the modern women who join the army, and jump and move around like the men?

They will also be the same. However, there the exercise is done not at a very young age, but later in development, so the effect is different. So far, many more men than woman join the army. There are women in the navy, air force, marines,

the NCC (National Cadet Corps) in nursing and a variety of other fields. However, there are relatively few women who actually engage in direct warfare, although some can now be found in the infantry, cavalry or artillery. Many women in the military can still be found in more of a support capacity where there are less physical demands.

Girls who learn judo and karate start at a young age.

That is all right. Judo is not an exercise, it is a martial art. Sit-ups and lifting heavy weights makes the body's passages hard and stiff. It is dangerous for a woman's passages to be hard, especially those of the womb.

From the viewpoint of the soul, men and women are the same; however, from the perspective of nature, there are differences. They have different hormonal systems. Women have many hormones not found in men. The weight of the brain of a man and a woman is not the same. The circuits in the brain are also different. If there is a difficulty, a man usually does not cry, whereas a woman may start crying immediately. The reproductive system is totally different; there are so many glands that men do not have.

In the olden days the practice of slavery was prevalent.

Yes. People from the Arab countries would attack countries all over the world and take the women away: one thousand, two thousand, regardless of how many and what race they belonged to. This was because their population was very low and they wanted to produce more children. People from Egypt and Rome would bring people back from Africa. They started kidnapping people since in those days Egypt and Rome had become wealthy, and when they became wealthy, they became lazy. The king had a lot of money, they started enjoying themselves, and they asked, "Who will work?" They decided to attack the neighbouring country of Africa and bring back two thousand people. All the big palaces in Egypt were built by the Jews. The Jews were kept as slaves in a poor and decrepit area known as a ghetto.

In Rome, slaves were sold. Aesop, whose stories are available in English, was also a slave. A lot of slaves were bound by chains around their legs. They were not free to marry a person of their choice. There were many rules they had to follow. Attackers would come and catch people and make them work. There was nothing to stop them.

In Saudi Arabia, no Arab of a high status ever works. People from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and other countries go there to work. The Arabs receive everything comfortably. Education and medical aid is free: everything is free as their government has a lot of money. With so much ease and comfort, in the future Saudi Arabia may also go down. Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India are not going to remain poor forever; the people from these countries are not foolish. They are very sharp. They are smart because they have had to struggle. The race that has had to struggle is always smart. The razor that is used every day is always kept sharp; the razor that is not used often becomes rusty. People here have to struggle to get two meals a day and to get their boys and girls married; there is a lot of social struggle.

Will Asia advance because of this social struggle?

The race that has social struggle is sure to rise one day. The race that likes comfort says, "Now we have money so why should we worry?" Such a race will die out. That was the fate of the people of Rome, Egypt and Greece. That will also happen to America. What are they doing now, sending people to the planet Mars! The cost of that runs into millions and billions of dollars. So many poor countries in the world could survive on that money.

The Asian races are struggling and will rise up one day. These rich countries make new financial laws and talk of free trade and the exchange rate. They have fixed the rate of one dollar as being equal to forty or forty-five rupees based on financial principles, which is incorrect. However, there is nobody to speak against it, and even if someone speaks out,

nobody will listen. They say that without fixing the rate of currency exchange it is not possible to carry out trade. I say that fixing the rate of exchange is unethical and impractical, but nobody listens. Whenever they wish, they increase the price by four paisa or reduce it by four paisa, throwing our share market into turmoil. When they see that the share market is going down, they change the rate of exchange linked to the dollar. These people are going to have trouble regarding this; in four or five years they will receive a blow.

England's currency is the pound, Germany's is the mark, for France it is the franc and Italy has the lira. Every country has a different currency; however, now they are going to bring out a joint currency called the euro, and there is a fight going on regarding the system to be used for fixing the rate of exchange for it. What should the rate of exchange be between the pound and the mark, and the mark and the franc? When they introduce the euro currency, on what basis will it be introduced?

The rupee is the currency for the whole of India. What would happen if there was a Bihari rupee and a Mumbai rupee, or a Delhi rupee and a Chennai rupee? A Delhi rupee would be equal to one hundred Bihari rupees, ninety Orissan rupees and sixty Bengali rupees. Since we are one country, we do not have a rate of exchange, and that is why everything is going well. A Central Government employee in Delhi receives a salary of five thousand rupees and in Deoghar it is the same; however, for the second fellow five thousand rupees is equivalent to fifty thousand rupees. A person can live here comfortably on a salary of five thousand, whereas in Delhi it is not possible. Nevertheless, the rate of exchange within the country does not keep changing every day; this is complicated and impractical.

By raising and lowering the share market and the exchange rate, they are assuming economic advantage. Asia does not have its own treasury. We have to borrow money from the bankers, whether it is the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund. That is why they call the shots. If Asia has

its own bank and borrows only from this bank, breaking off economic ties with Europe and America and disallowing a rate of exchange for its currency, the value of the currency will always remain the same and prosperity will rapidly increase here. It is very difficult to understand and explain this; however, the outcome is that we are poor. Now they are introducing a joint currency in Europe, and the result will be that the people of Italy will become poor like the Biharis, and Germany will become richer.

Don't the people in Italy or Spain know that this will make them poor? Don't they have any objections?

Their reasoning for joining is based on two points. The first is the Maastricht treaty. Six to seven years ago a treaty was formed in the city of Maastricht. At that time, Madame Thatcher was in charge in England and she was against the treaty. Next there was a referendum in Denmark and the people there also did not accept the treaty; however, in the second referendum the treaty was passed in Denmark by a very slim margin. Similarly, each country had a referendum to determine whether or not the people wanted to accept the treaty.

The second point is that the financial setup of businessmen and industrialists is quite different from that of ordinary people. If you were to ask a labourer and a businessman about their principles regarding money, their answers would be different; they cannot be the same. If an ordinary person says 'yes' to the treaty, he may not even know its outcome. With a common rate of exchange, the salaries in Italy will decrease in value. Suppose the Central Government of India made a rule that the salary should be fixed at five thousand rupees, and the people in Delhi received five thousand rupees and so did the people in Rikhia. Now here in Rikhia, five thousand rupees is equivalent to twenty-five thousand and there in Delhi five thousand rupees is worth almost nothing. The cost of living for people in Delhi is high, and that is why they feel five thousand rupees is a small amount.

The standard of living in Rikhia is low; therefore, for the people of Rikhia five thousand rupees is worth more. The people in Delhi want expensive shoes and umbrellas, cars and air conditioners; they want so many things which people here do not want. Here in Rikhia you can manage with a broken cycle or you can even get by on foot. Consequently, in Delhi five thousand rupees will be worth less, whereas here it is more. In such a situation, the people in Delhi would incur a loss.

This kind of a loss exists everywhere; however, we do not feel it as much over here, as the price of basic necessities is nearly the same all over India. The price of sugar in Delhi is the same as that in Deoghar. It might differ by twenty-five or fifty paise due to transport. Whatever is available in plenty in a particular place will always be a bit cheaper there; however, the price of cement, iron, and so on is the same all over India. If you build a house in Mumbai or in Deoghar, the building cost will be almost the same. Steel, cement and bricks cost the same. There will be a difference in the cost of labour; a house that you can build for ten thousand rupees in Mumbai will cost eight to nine thousand in Bihar. Similarly, the train fare is the same across India. The bus and taxi fares are also roughly the same. However, this is not the case in Europe. You will see differences there.

My main contention is that, these days, we are adversely affected by those who evaluate the financial currencies and who have started the system of fixing the rate of exchange. I remember during my childhood we used to buy three dollars for one rupee. I am talking of the time before 1940. We used to buy two pounds for one rupee. The rupee used to be made of approximately twelve grams of silver, and it displayed the picture of Queen Victoria. Now, one pound is equal to seventy rupees. Formerly, the rupee was made of silver; now, it has turned to paper. Originally, its value was determined according to the value of silver, but now it is fixed on market conditions. In those times, coins were also made of gold. The rupee, eight anna and four anna coins were made of gold.

Now, you cannot find them anywhere; however, earlier they were quite common.

We used to give our servants a four anna gold coin; I myself have given it. At our place, the people who looked after the agricultural fields were considered very important. They and their families would stay awake day and night; otherwise, the crops would be destroyed in half an hour. Five hundred sparrows would fly into the fields and two hundred deer would come at night. Therefore, once a year these people would be given a four anna gold coin.

It was a custom at our place that the grains from the crops did not come home. They used to be kept in the field itself. On a fixed day, the masons, blacksmiths, leather workers, brahmins, barbers and all others who did any work for us, were called and they would bring their boxes along with them. The proportion to be given to each person was determined, and after giving to everyone, what was left was ours. We used to keep twenty percent and eighty percent was distributed. A farmer used to keep twenty percent of his crops and eighty percent would be given away, regardless of whether there was a famine or any other grim situation. It had to be given to the tailor and the worker in the cremation ground as well. If there had been a birth in the house, a pandit would have performed pooja and prepared the horoscope, and he would also get a share. Whoever did any work would collect their share, and this would be enough for the whole year. Out of these, the person who was the keeper of the fields would also be given a four anna gold coin.

How did all this gold and silver disappear? When the government changes the coins, it keeps the old ones and introduces new ones, so where did these gold and silver coins disappear to? When battles are fought and new governments are formed, they make all this change. Therefore, Indians from time immemorial have made a resolution not to give gold to the government; they keep all the gold themselves. However, if you keep all the gold yourself, the government will forcibly take it from you. People thought, 'What do we do

about this?’ The solution was *kanyadaan*, dowry. They made *mangalasutras* or bridal necklaces of gold. What could the government do? It couldn’t levy a tax on mangalasutras! In this way, in our religion gold became associated with life and marriage. For this reason, the government was afraid to make laws; how could the government take away someone’s bangles and mangalasutra? This is why in India gold has become a personal thing. There is a lot of gold in India; even a poor labourer will have at least one *tola*, approximately twelve grams, of gold in his house.

There are nine hundred million people in India. If you calculate, there will be at least nine hundred million tolas, or almost eleven billion grams of gold. We learnt this lesson about keeping gold when we saw that the kings had a lot of gold, and even if there was a good king who fed everyone well, an attack on him meant the attackers would loot all the gold. Therefore, the kings could not be depended upon; the gold had to be with the subjects. This is a very good way. When the gold is with the subjects, it is no longer a part of national chaos. The gold that is with you or me is not considered part of the national wealth; it is beyond the accounting books. National wealth includes only that which is within the government treasury.

Is that is why our nation is poor, but the common man is not?

The terminology associated with poverty is very strange. Who would you term as poor? India is poor; however, there are a lot of people who have gold. Gold is given and received during marriage. A ring has gold in it. The rich people have more, the poor have less; among them, there could also be a penniless person who has nothing at all.

People are poor due to their habits. They have money for food, but they waste it on liquor, therefore they do not have enough to eat.

No, there is poverty all over the world. It is not just here; it is in England, America and France as well. However, there the

government gives the poor people unemployment or social security benefits, known as the dole. If their dole is stopped, they will be in the same position as over here. If everyone in need in India got the dole, everything would improve.

In New York, thousands of homeless people put their sleeping bags in long cardboard boxes and spread tarpaulins over them to keep out the rain. When the police arrive, they all run away. In some high crime areas, when people enter a shop, they keep the back wheel of their bicycle under their arm; otherwise, their cycle might be stolen by breaking the lock! In France, when I took a walk by the river Seine, I saw people living inside big pipes.

I am not very optimistic about the future of Europe and America. The culture of Asia is in a better position. Asia is awakening with great speed. China has worked a lot in this respect. Malaysia has also contributed substantially. Their Prime Minister is a very sensible man. In Malaysia, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Malays and Chinese all live together in harmony and peace. There are a lot of Tamils settled there. It is a very modern and orderly country. Swami Sivananda's ashram is located in Malaysia, at the Batuk Caves. There is also one at Johar Bahri, where Swami Sivananda used to practise medicine.

Things are more or less going well in China. The government of China is Communist, though their market and financial systems are not. Their land, schools, banks, aircraft and factories are personally owned. In China, personal wealth is greater than the national wealth, just as it is in India; however, their political thinking is still Communist. They have kept communism and capitalism side by side. The principles of each are different. In the capitalistic system, every individual has the freedom to make profits, to enter the market and enter into competition. Now everyone is moving towards capitalism, even the people of Russia.

In China, people are willing to give a lot to the nation. Every man and woman there has to work. They leave their children in school, lock their houses and go to work. There

is no work that is superior or inferior; whatever work is given has to be done. They believe a lot in ethics, duty and good conduct. Since ancient times, China has been an atheist state. People here believe in God who has made this world, the stars and the moon; the people there do not believe in all this. Confucius has had the biggest effect on their minds. God does not enter their lives; however, they do believe in worshipping certain deities. They also believe in ghosts and spirits, black magic, and that if you worship a particular deity in a particular manner, you will get a son, or your daughter will get married. All this goes on there as well, in the same way as we believe that if you worship Hanuman you will get a particular result and if you worship Santoshi Ma you will get something else. In China they worship many gods, but they do not have one Supreme Ruler like Allah in Islam, or God in Christianity, or Brahma in Vedanta. That is why the Chinese were very impressed when they came in contact with the Buddhist religion.

The principles of Lord Buddha and Confucius are quite similar, which is why they called Acharya Padmasambhava to China and the teaching of Sanskrit commenced there. The Buddhist religion went first from India to China, then from China to Korea and then to Japan. As far as customs and practices go, they are the same.

In Thailand, a lot of coconut and monkey nuts are used to make food, just like in South India.

There is a reason for that. Just as the English had colonies all over the world, similarly, many hundreds of years ago, India also had colonies. Therefore, you will find a lot of similarity in names, food and lifestyle. However, there are also a lot of things that came to India from South-East Asia, for example, rudraksha beads. They have many forests of rudraksha there. The *kamandalus*, or carry pots kept by sadhus, came from there. Double coconuts are found there, and these are cut from the centre and a stick is passed through to make two kamandalus. That kind of coconut is not found here.

You will find a lot of things that have come from South-East Asia, such as giving alms to a sadhu. Nowadays, this has become very difficult in India. The poor person is not able to give and the rich man does not give. If you go to any house in Thailand you will get something to eat. In every house rice is made separately for guests. If there are leftovers, it is no problem. If you go to five houses, your stomach will be full. However, you will receive alms only before midday, not in the evening. If you go at around ten to eleven o'clock in the morning and stand at the door, women will come, not men, and give you a spoonful in your kamandalu. Five big spoonfuls from five houses is more than enough. This is the tradition there.

In Thailand, the sannyasins go to the university to study wearing geru clothes. At the university, some study the teachings of Buddha and some study other subjects. In Thailand, every Buddhist has to become a sadhu for at least fifteen days. From a king to a pauper, every Buddhist has to stay in a *math* or monastery for at least fifteen days. They are given a ten by ten foot room in the math, containing a mat, a mattress, a vessel for water, a staff and a kamandalu. They shave their heads and are given a long geru cloth, which is wrapped around like a sari. They have to sleep with the mat on the ground, and in the morning after waking up and having a bath, they go to the temple and read from a holy book the way we read the *Ramacharitamanas*. After prayers and worship, the math has to be cleaned. They look after the cattle and agricultural work and perform other such activities; there is no administrative work at the math. At ten in the morning, they take their bowl and staff and go out to ask for alms. They sit under a tree near a stream, and eat whatever they have received as alms. They leave the leftovers for the birds and beasts and clean their bowl. When they come back they leave the bowl upside down outside the room. This indicates they have eaten. There is only one meal at the math, not twice a day. Kings and emperors also live this way when they are at the math.

Satsang 13

22 September 1997



There are four *mahavakyas*, supreme utterances, in the Vedas:

1. *Prajnanam Brahma*: Brahman is knowledge and realization.
2. *Aham Brahmasmi*: I am the higher consciousness.
3. *Tat Tvam Asi*: You are that.
4. *Ayamatma Brahma*. My soul is the higher consciousness.

The essence of the vedic thought is contained in these four mahavakyas. They contain the truth. You are Brahma.

However, it is difficult to realize this, for when you think about yourself, you feel you are a robber or a dacoit, a rascal or a liar. How then can you know yourself?

The saints and learned people teach that you must first purify yourself. You must bring your mind to one point, concentrate and bring it under your control. How do you bring this mind to one point? You cannot force the mind to concentrate. A way to bring it to one point is through worship with form. Worship with form is not an end; it is a means, a way. Worship with form includes kirtan and bhajan, rituals, arati, pilgrimage, having a guru, becoming a disciple; these are all external ways.

A stick of wood has fire within it, but if you look at a stick, you see only a stick. Fire is hidden in the stick; it is not apparent. It will appear only by rubbing it. An atom bomb is made from uranium. Uranium is found in a yellow stone which is mined. When its purity is thirty-six percent, you can make electricity from it. When its purity is ninety-six percent, you can make a bomb out of it. It has such tremendous strength that if it were dropped here, half of Bihar would be destroyed. Just as nuclear power is hidden in uranium, fire is hidden in a stick of wood, or a pearl hidden in an oyster; in a similar way Brahma is hidden in the individual soul. What is the method of separating it? You do not become Brahma simply by saying *Aham Brahmasmi*, "I am Brahma." You can make a parrot chant the name of Rama for his entire life, yet at the time of death it will still say, "Tweet." You say, "I am Brahma" easily, yet if the food has not been cooked properly, how angry you get! At that time, you do not consider yourself Brahma; you get so angry with the cook.

What is the way to know Brahma?

First, make someone your guru. After that, serve your guru. The meaning of 'guru seva' is not just to fill his *hookah*, smoking pipe. If he says, "Serve the lepers", then do that. Whether he asks you to cultivate the land or clean the toilet or cut the vegetables, doing what the guru says is called *seva*,

selfless service. You should not say, "I have a BA and so I will only work on the computer," or "I am a doctor so I will only check pulse." Seva means giving up your ego. Suppose you are a brahmin from a rich family and I say to you, "Go and pick up the cow dung every morning and bring it here." You will think, 'He doesn't know my capability. Let me inform him that I am a chartered accountant and can do accounting work.' This is ego. 'I am a learned person', 'I am a rich man's son', 'I am a woman' or 'I am a man'. Thinking this is pride. The meaning of pride is thinking, 'I am someone.' If you think, 'I am a woman', it is pride. Therefore, the first thing is seva, and seva is difficult.

There was a yogi in Tibet by the name of Milarepa. His guru was a student of Nalanda. When Milrepa came to his guru, his guru said, "You think you are great because you have left your home and family. Go and sleep out there on the veranda." He used to kick him on his way in and out, "Sleep properly, you ignorant fool!" He always rebuked him and would give him leftovers after he had finished eating his own food. One day, the guru had gone out, so the guru's wife gave him a piping hot piece of meat and said, "Eat this quickly before Guruji returns." Just at that moment, the guru returned and said, "Oh, so in my absence all this is going on now." He accused him and said, "You will not stay here any more. Go and build your house on that mountain." The poor boy must have been just twelve or fourteen years old. He would lift a stone, take it to the mountaintop and come back again. One day, while building the house, he felt very tired. He left the stone in the middle of the road and went off to sleep. The guru saw this and said, "So you were sleeping. You will not stay up there. Bring all the stones down again." He once again brought down all the stones he had carried up. In this manner, the guru made him build the house and break it down several times. If you had been there you would have said, "Guruji has lost his head!"

One day, while carrying the stones, he slipped and fell. The stone went tumbling down the mountainside just as the

guru was coming up and he was caught making a mistake. The guru asked, "What happened?" He said, "Guruji, the stone fell down." The guru said, "Why didn't you fall instead of the stone?" Saying this, he kicked Milarepa. Milarepa started falling from the mountain, but not for long. Soon he became light as a flower, flew through the air and fell at the feet of his guru. To this day, he is known and respected in Tibet as the 'Flower Yogi'.

Milarepa was unconcerned by the whole drama enacted by the guru. His only thought was, "Whatever Guruji tells me, I will do." At that point his guru told him to do a particular sadhana. He said, "Your work is not yet over; only the test to see if you are my disciple has been completed." He showed him the cave where he had to perform his sadhana and said, "Do not eat any food, place a lamp on your head and sit in padmasana. Do not get up until the flame is extinguished." Milarepa lived in the cave and drank the water from a nearby river. There was a lot of moss accumulated in it. As he went on drinking the mossy water, his body turned green in colour. His sister came looking for him, and when she reached him she saw that he had turned completely green. Milarepa is famous all over the world and in Tibet he is highly revered.

A person must make someone his guru and then he must have his head cut off before his guru. The head means the ego. This is a very difficult task since every disciple has his ego: the pride of capability and of education. The ego is of various kinds. Swami Sivananda used to tell us:

*Kings and landlords, give up pride.
Collectors and tehsildars, give up pride.
Sannyasins and gurus, give up pride.*

A guru also has pride. Believing you are a guru is also pride. It is necessary, therefore, to ensure that a disciple does not become proud. It is only then that the guru reveals things to you and you get results in a very short time. If the tip of the match is wet, it will not light; however, if it becomes dry, it will light up in just one try. This has been said in all religions.

Sometimes the intellect also gets in the way.

Intellect and emotions are two different things. Emotions are natural, determined by your personal nature. Nobody creates them or teaches them. Who taught you affection, fear or lust? No one taught you to cry, to laugh, to feel sad or experience happiness. These are emotions which are distinct from intellect. Intellect can be acquired. Intellect refers to the brain. Debate and discussion, thought and deliberation: these are manifestations of the intellect. The knowledge of hot and cold, of black and white comes from the intellect. Emotions involve an experience, whether it is one of anger, affection or pain. Emotion is an experience; intellect is knowledge.

All knowledge comes from the intellect, and the basis of intellect is study, contemplation and deliberation. Read books, think, listen to me, listen to him: all this is knowledge. Knowledge means information. Everything I am saying is information. All that you are grasping is being processed by the brain. This is not the subject matter of emotion; if it becomes a subject matter of emotion, humankind will be liberated! The foundation of emotions is faith and belief, and they are never questioned. Have you ever questioned who your father is? Have you ever asked your mother to prove that your father is really your father? The basis for accepting this is faith and belief. Anything that is fixed in your mind remains fixed; faith and belief are never destroyed. If my faith is broken then it was not faith, but an intellectual notion. Whether you get along with your mother or not, even if she beats you for your entire life, you will never say that she is not your mother. This faith will never be shaken.

Faith and belief are based on emotions, and they are the foundation of a number of relationships in society, for example, the relationship between a guru and disciple. After all, I am from one place and you are from another. There is no blood relation, and yet a bond is established based on faith. In the same manner, you marry someone from a different family. You do not have the same bloodline, nor are you from the same family, yet you say, "You and I are one. You are my

better half.” This is faith. This consists of the emotion of love, the emotion of affection, the emotion of sweet love, all kinds of emotions are involved.

Sometimes, due to certain reasons, disciples leave their gurus and go away. Does this mean they did not have any faith or belief, only an intellectual idea?

The guru-disciple relationship is very nice to hear about; however, very few people are able to fulfil it. There are all kinds of people in this world. When a thief enters your house in the guise of a servant, he washes your utensils, your clothes, cooks food for you, does everything; yet his eyes are always on your wealth. Similarly, there are a lot of disciples who come to their guru to gain *siddhis*, psychic powers. Someone runs away from home, someone else does not feel happy at home; the wife has died or the son has passed away, or he has suffered a loss in business, or someone has said something offensive, and so for a short while a feeling arises of wanting to be free from worldly desires. This is known as *kshanika vairagya*, a momentary wish to be free from desires. The mind moves away from the world and the person thinks, ‘Let’s go to the ashram, shave off the hair and comfortably sing the Lord’s praise.’ A lot of people come here thinking like this. Many people used to come to me thinking, ‘Swamiji will send me abroad.’ They would stay for four to five years, and when they realized that Swamiji was not sending them abroad, they would leave saying, “Swamiji is not a good person.” I knew all this very well.

When people come here to become disciples, they come with different perspectives, and they receive exactly in accordance to the perspective they come with. However, if someone comes to live with the guru thinking, ‘I am going to live here and die here,’ and he does not have the desire to become someone, to do something or bring about something, then whether the guru puts him on a pedestal or treats him with scorn, it makes no difference to him. After marriage, when a girl comes to a different house, she does not think,

‘After some time I will leave everything and go back. If my husband is an alcoholic or an adulterer, I will leave him and go back.’ For her, it is a situation of living there and dying there. However, such disciples are very few. A guru may receive just one out of hundreds of thousands of disciples.

It is very difficult to be a true disciple. Read the stories of the Sikh gurus. They are very strange stories. There was a Sikh called Angad who used to clean utensils and drains in his guru’s ashram. When his guru’s time of death arrived, all the well-educated disciples thought it was now time for them to occupy his position. Everyone’s eyes were on his seat, but the guru’s eyes were on someone else. He said, “Call Angad.” Angad was called. The guru said, “He will be your guru from today, Guru Angad Dev!”

There have been many gurus like that. The stories are found everywhere. It is not necessary for a guru to be well-educated. He should be humble like a blade of grass, patient like a tree, give respect to others and sing bhajans all the time. These are the attributes of a guru, according to the scriptures:

*Trinaadapi suneechena tarorapi sahishmunaa
Amaaninaa maandena keertaneeyaha sadaa hariha*

(A guru is one), who is humble like a blade of grass,
patient like a tree, who respects others and sings kirtans
of Hari all the time.

A guru is one who does not say that others are beneath him, that they are beggars or thieves or bribe-takers or adulterers or people with bad intentions. A sadhu or guru has no right to say this. His time is used only for chanting the name of God and singing kirtan. Kirtan does not mean just playing the harmonium or the tabla. Kirtan means to ponder the power of God, to spread the glory of God.

Guru Nanaka was a great guru of his time. He was from the vaishya caste and he was given work in the government grain warehouse. In those days, grains were measured on a weighing scale. Once, he was weighing the grains and when



he reached the count of thirteen, instead of continuing to count, he went on repeating: *Terah, terah . . .* – “Thirteen, thirteen . . . ” Phonetically, ‘terah’ means ‘yours’. He was absorbed in the thought of God, and while repeating, “*Terah, terah . . .*” he gave away all the grain. He emptied out the entire government warehouse! He didn’t stay there for long. He became a fakir.

Once he travelled to Mecca, which is a centre of pilgrimage for Muslims. The peculiarity of this pilgrimage centre is that no one from another religion can go there, even if he is the President of America. They do not even allow photographs to be taken. Nevertheless, Guru Nanaka reached there. It was afternoon, and he had found a comfortable spot to sleep in. A man came to him and said, “Hey! Move your leg from here. Your leg is facing the Kaaba, the shrine.” Guru Nanaka replied, “I am a very old man. Shift my leg to a direction where the Kaaba is not.” Having said this, he went back to sleep. The man tried to move his leg, and wherever he moved his legs, the Kaaba also moved in that direction! This story is approximately five hundred years old. Apart from Guru Nanaka, no other non-Muslim has ever visited Mecca. No one can go there, but Nanakaji managed to do so.

I read somewhere that Guru Nanaka was the avatara of Janaka.

It is very difficult to say who you were and who I was over different lifetimes. It is a certain fact that there is not just one life; there is always rebirth. The scriptures are proof of this, and people are also proof of this. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (4:5), Sri Krishna says:

*Bahooni me vyateetaani janmaani tava chaarjuna;
Taanyaham veda sarvaani na tvam vettha parantapa.*

I have had many births and so have you. This is not your first and last birth. You do not know about these births, but I do.

There are many lives, but which person was what in a particular birth is difficult to say. The saints have sometimes given clues. There is a beautiful place in the Himalayas called Hemkund. It has a *gurudwara*, a Sikh temple, as well as a temple of Lakshmi. They give you a mattress and hot water also. A lot of Sikhs go there for a purificatory bath. It has been written that Guru Govind Singh had done penance at that place in his previous birth. However, ordinarily not everyone has knowledge of their previous births. Some do have it yet do not talk about it. After all, what will you gain by speaking about it?

Is it similar to the way that seeds are sown when the crops are cut and new crops grow from that?

Yes, we can see this process. You will give birth to a child and she in turn will give birth to another child; that is easy to understand. However, we are not talking about the bodily life, but the life of the soul. This body is a cage or a house. In the same way that you have to change your house when you are transferred in your job, the soul also has to change its residence; it has to leave its old body and start fresh with a new one since the soul still has its desires. Those wishes, desires and passions that it could not fulfil in this life become impressions stored in the subtle body.

Let us suppose you wish to have a son. When this wish was born, a seed was also born. You cannot say it was just a thought; the seed exists. You saw me ten years ago, and you are seeing me now, but you recognized me, didn't you? There is an album inside you in which you have my photograph. That is why you recognized me even after ten years. When you saw me ten years ago, a seed was formed and went into the subtle body. For this reason, today you are able to tell me that you know me. This is the power of memory.

Whatever you wish for gets stored in your subtle or causal body as a seed. Due to this causal body, after death you start searching for another mother, another womb, and another body. You will never cease to be reborn while you still have unfinished karmas. When all your karmas are finished, only then will you attain liberation. This is what we call the 'final death'. As long as your karmas are not completely exhausted and you still have desires, how will you die? Only the body will die; your soul will live on, and in the next life it will try to fulfil those wishes once again. It will fulfil some desires and create some new ones; the egg from the chicken and the chicken from the egg. In this way, the system of cause and effect, the cycle of life and death, goes on continuously.

What is the way to break this cycle?

The main precept of the vedic philosophy is that after eight million, four hundred thousand lifetimes, the soul attains the life of a human being. It is not a life meant for enjoyment; rather, it is a life meant for liberation. With a human body you can attain liberation. In the discussion between Rama and Lakshmana in the *Ramacharitamanas*, there is an event in which Rama calls all his subjects and says:

*Bade bhaga maanusha tanu paavaa; sura durlabha saba
granthanhi gaavaa.
Saadhana dhaama mochchha kara divaraa; paayi na jehin
paraloka savaaraa.*

It is due to great fortune that you have attained a human body, which, as the scriptures say, is difficult to attain even for the gods. This body is a place for sadhana, the door to liberation. Even after receiving it, if one is not able to attain liberation, then one undergoes pain even in the other world.

This is *Kali Yuga*, the age of darkness. When I say these things in Kali Yuga, they are all lofty matters, not practical ones. The four ages have four goals for humankind: artha, kama, dharma and moksha. Two of these goals are predominant in Kali Yuga: artha and kama. *Artha* means material wealth: money, property and land. *Kama* means desire. In this age, only these two goals are important and sadhana should be based on these two goals, not on any others. Today, even if you do something good, its goal will be artha and kama. You can perform the highest penance, do kundalini sadhana, say prayers, do tantra sadhana or do Vaishnava sadhana; the goal will be artha and kama. Even if you wish to see God, the goal will remain the same.

In this age of artha and kama you can perform only two sadhanas: helping others and chanting God's name. These are practical ways; not everything is practical. In Kali Yuga, do not even talk of things like liberation. It will remain purely theoretical, like a lecture on water in a desert. Chant God's name, whether with a mala or with the breath, spoken or written, whether it is Rama's name or *Om Namah Shivaya*; it can be any name. In Kali Yuga that is all a person can do. More than this is not possible.

How long does a man live in this age? By the time he approaches forty years, his hair begins to grey. A lot of people visit doctors right from childhood; they are prone to sicknesses. Our genetic makeup has become weak. Earlier, people used to live for a hundred to two hundred years. Until the age of fifty, they would fulfil their desires. Now, even the enjoyment is not complete. Therefore, during these times it is necessary to do only what is possible and practical, and the

only practical thing is to chant God's name in the morning, afternoon, evening and night, for half an hour or fifteen minutes, and do something good for others. This does not mean securing a benefit for a relative. Helping those in need and those who are suffering is called being altruistic. Apart from these two things, forget about everything else. If you have the time, read the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Ramayana* and the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. In this age, only these two things are practical, and nothing else.

In this age, what can be done to improve the financial status of society?

India is not in the twentieth century. In comparison to the historical standard of Europe, India is in the eighteenth century. However, it will not remain like this for long. In today's times, no country can remain untouched by the cycle of change. Our present status is not going to continue for long. There are many compulsions. When the price of sugar soars to eighteen rupees per kilo, a person cannot go on as before; he has to change, he has to leave things behind. The farmer is foolishly sitting on his four hectares of land. It is not enough to sustain him; however, he continues to try to live on it because it is his land. If he sells that land for one or two lakh rupees and deposits it in a bank, he will be able to live in comfort. His issue is that it is his ancestral land and he won't let go of it. It is like a stone fixed to his head; it simply won't break. However, in the future, that stone will chip away and break. People will migrate from the villages.

If you want to hear about the changing of an age, you should hear about the people of Europe. People left their homes in England and went to America, Canada and Australia. They left their wives and children and went alone. Their whole society changed. They left their homes and went thousands of miles away. Greece and Italy are so far away from America and Australia. It took months to reach those places. However, until a person leaves his home and goes elsewhere he will not attain wealth. Lakshmi favours the one who takes a chance.

Satsang 14

23 September 1997



If a disciple makes a mistake unknowingly or due to his foolishness and later understands his mistake, what is his penance for that?

There is no need for penance. Everyone makes mistakes. That said, a person does not improve by just knowing his mistakes. Many people drink liquor; everyone knows this is wrong, yet they drink it. Just knowing you have made a mistake is not enough to improve. It is not a virtue to just know in your mind that you have made a mistake and regret it. I have arrived at this state after a lot of self-analysis and feel that if someone makes a mistake, whether it is a disciple or a son or daughter,

regretting the mistake does not offer them any solution. A problem can be solved with sadhana, with effort. If a person eats too much or eats the wrong kind of food, what is the solution for that? If he drinks liquor or tells lies, what is the solution? Each mistake should be treated as a separate issue, and there is no one umbrella solution for all problems.

Drinking tea was a big weakness of mine, since in Kumaon tea used to be consumed like water. It is a cold country, and who wants to drink water when it is cold? We would drink tea throughout the day. When I came to Rishikesh, I could not get tea at all. Nobody there drank tea. Nevertheless, I found a solution. I thought, "Tea is my weakness, so I will start drinking tea without milk." In this way, my weakness for tea went away. Now I can survive with or without tea.

On making enquiries, I found out that tea contains traces of opium. When tea leaves are processed, an opium solution is sprinkled over them to stop them from rotting. When milk is added to the opium, it affects you and you become addicted to it. In reality, you drink tea not for the tea, but for the opium. When I found out why I had this weakness for tea, I started having it without milk. Later, I added lemon juice to it since lemon juice is an antidote for intoxication. In this way, my weakness for tea disappeared. You have to find a solution for your weaknesses, one by one. Regretting them will be of no use, it will not remove the weaknesses; this is my firm belief. Repentance is a mental weakness. Instead, find a practical solution to eliminate your weaknesses.

As far as a disciple making a mistake goes, remember one thing: it is human nature to disobey orders. Only the disciple who has a brain disobeys orders. The son who has less intelligence does every single thing his father wants him to. You can also argue that a son who does everything his father wishes him to do is a fool, and the one who does not listen has a mind of his own. There should be unity between guru and disciple; however, not to the extent that if the guru says "Crows are red", the disciple agrees and says, "Yes Guruji, crows are red."

If the guru suffers because of the disciple, what happens then?

If the guru suffers then he is not a guru at all. If a father suffers due to his son then he is not a father. If the son makes mistakes, runs away from home, takes drugs, gets into violent fights, goes to jail and the father suffers because of all this, he is an unworthy father. You have given birth to a son and so be it. Now he will have to pay for his actions and you will pay for yours. You take a sapling from a mango tree and plant it. Whether the new tree produces a lot of mangoes or is eaten up by worms, what has the old tree got to do with it?

Obedience does not merely mean following every single instruction. It means the disciple should live according to the commands of his guru; that is, he should do such things instructed by his guru that may be difficult, yet are important. There were so many things about Swami Sivananda that I did not like. He used to make us wash the feet of lepers. I could not understand this. He kept me in a hospital for lepers for six months. After that, he made me build a colony for two hundred and fifty lepers. We used to go to their place every evening to read the *Ramacharitamanas*. We would even supply them with packets of *bidis*, Indian cigarettes, that we somehow procured. I did not enjoy doing this work. I did it only because I was told to do it.

On 2nd October, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, Swami Sivananda used to call all the sweepers to the ashram. After giving them a bath, new clean clothes and washing their feet, he would feed them. He believed in this. If someone asked for a blanket he would give one immediately. He would never say, "I gave you one just yesterday." I used to tell him, "That rascal takes the blanket and sells it in Rishikesh!" He would reply, "Let him sell it." I could not understand this at all; now, after so many years, I can understand it.

You need a highly cultivated intellect in order to understand the guru. I used to do whatever my guru said, but I had no faith in it. However, these days if someone were to tell me, "That person is selling your blanket in Deoghar,"

I would say, "Let him sell it. What difference does it make? My job is to give the blanket; his job is to sell it. After all, he got fifty rupees for it, didn't he? He benefited from it!"

If you think about it, you are all doing the same thing. He sold only his blanket; you are selling off your entire life. After all, God has given you this life to achieve something. He gave you your intellect, your senses and your strength as a donation. He thought, "These people will make good use of it." In reality, you are not making good use of it. So God should stop giving you all this, but He does not do that. God says, "My job is to give. Your job is to breach that trust." This is God's divine principle, which I now understand: "I want to help; let everyone else do what they want."

If a girl from the area, even one who has a child, comes to ask for things given during the ceremonial homecoming at the father-in-law's house, I tell the ashram officials, "The girl is ours; give her all these things. What difference does it make whether or not she is being truthful? At least on this pretext, these things go to others. If you make detailed investigations before doing good work, you will never be able to do any good work." In reality, whatever good work we are doing, we are not doing it for others; we are doing it for ourselves. Do you use soap on your clothes to increase the sales of the shopkeeper or to clean the clothes?

Whatever work you do, you are doing it for yourself. Whether you do something good or bad, it is going to come back to you. If you throw a ball against the wall, it is bound to come back to you. Every action has a reaction, a result. Whatever action you perform, it is certain to bear fruit; no one can avoid it. Even Rama could not escape from it.

We generally see that the one who does good work gets all kinds of difficulties and suffering, whereas the one doing bad deeds gets nothing but happiness. Why is this?

That is not true. If that were the case, the world would turn into a jungle. What you earned yesterday you are spending today, and what you are earning today you will

spend tomorrow. Whatever happiness or sadness you receive depends on your earnings. The fruit of what you did yesterday is coming to you today. Bad behaviour is also a karma, and that karma, in turn, bears its fruit. If you do not believe this, spend time with robbers and thieves and observe them. They are fearful, day and night. A sword is hanging over their heads all the time. The people in their houses are always sick; the daughter is epileptic or the son cannot walk. Karma does not spare anyone.

The second point is, what is the definition of happiness and suffering? You are getting your meals every morning and evening; you are carefree. You have a wife; she does her work, cooks and cleans everything. You have a son who goes to school; after a few years he will get a job and get married. This is one set of circumstances. The second example is that there is a lot of money in the family, there is agricultural land and plenty of servants. However, the wife is in Patna suffering from pneumonia and the son comes home drunk every evening and beats his wife. In which circumstance is there happiness and in which is there suffering?

When the mind is without worries, there is happiness and when the mind is full of worries there is suffering. You may wear good clothes and eat good food. That is not happiness; that is gratification or enjoyment. There is a big difference between happiness and gratification. Wearing good clothes, getting a stylish hair cut it is gratification, not happiness. Happiness is a state of mind and so is unhappiness. These are not connected to money, wife, children, birth or death. If they were, we sadhus would be the unhappiest people, as we have no wife, children, house or money!

*Chhaha gayi chintaa miti manuvaa beparavaaha;
Jisko kacchu na chaahiye vo hee shaahanshaaha.*

Desire has gone, worries have left, and the mind is without care, the one who doesn't want anything is a veritable king.

This is joy and sorrow. Therefore, to say that in today's times good people are suffering and bad people are happy is not right. People do wrong things for a while, but later they also get a big blow. Even in countries like America, Germany or France, where there is a lot of money, people are suffering so much! The best government in terms of social welfare is that of Sweden; however, they also have the highest rate of suicide! There is no unemployment in that country. If an unmarried girl gets pregnant, she can approach the government, have her name registered for state welfare and receive a fixed amount every month. No one will say, "Your father's reputation is at stake and therefore you should have an abortion." The company where she is employed receives a notice that she is pregnant and all related rules are followed. Upon the birth of the child, she is given an amount equal to twenty to twenty-five thousand dollars. When the child is born, only the mother's name is recorded on the form; no one asks for the father's name.

The point I am making is this: in a country where the government provides so much social welfare, where unmarried girls who are pregnant do not necessarily need to commit suicide, where even an illegitimate child can remain alive, where there are such good arrangements made by the government, why are there still so many suicides? It is because those people who have a lot of money, who have no worries concerning a job, wife or children, have depressed and melancholic minds. They think, 'It's better to die than to live like this.' Poor, deprived people, on the other hand, are busy struggling. Therefore, it is wrong to say that a person is happy only when he has everything. Happiness and unhappiness are states of mind.

This means that it is good for ordinary people to have worries?

Yes. If your worries are over, a lot of you will commit suicide or turn to other harmful activities. It is because of worries that your mind cannot run around from one place to another like

a wild animal. On the one hand, your mind is caught up by your wife's illness, and on the other hand you have to think about the poverty in your house or your daughter's marriage or the dispute in court. The mind is busy all the time. It is best when the mind is busy and occupied. An empty mind is the devil's workshop.

That is why in poor countries like India there is less crime, suicide and mental illness. In rich countries, there are more robberies and murders in one month than there are in an entire year in India. In our country, people are poor, blind, lame and physically handicapped; however, there is not as much crime as in those countries. England's population is very small, yet there are so many mentally ill people there, so many suffer from multiple sclerosis for which the doctors have no cure.

From one perspective, poverty is a blessing and being wealthy is a big curse! I am saying this in all honesty; no one should take offence. Money brings with it a lot of vices. However, even if you are poor, you should develop a modern way of living and have a higher way of thinking. Never mind if your pocket is light and the bank balance is low; your way of thinking and living should be good. Sadhus have always lived this way. After all, how did Lord Buddha, who is highly revered today, live his life? Every morning at 10 o'clock he would set out with his stick and begging bowl to ask for alms. He asked for alms until the age of eighty. He would eat once a day, clean his bowl and put it away. Apart from this, he would not have any tea or snacks during the day.

Lord Buddha was a prince, the only son of King Shuddhodhana of the Shakya dynasty, and he was named Siddhartha. When he was born, lotuses began to bloom everywhere! The royal astrologer had told King Shuddhodhana that this boy would be a great prophet. King Shuddhodhana became scared. He thought, 'I begot a son in my old age and now he will become a sadhu!' He kept his son inside the palace constantly; he did not send him out at all. The prince lived with great enjoyment and comfort, the way children of royal

families used to live. The king thought, 'If he doesn't meet with others, how can he become a sadhu?'

One day, when Siddhartha was going on a chariot ride, he saw an old woman, and then a corpse. He asked his charioteer what they were. His charioteer replied, "Everyone becomes like this one day." On hearing this, the sadhu within him woke up, and at the age of thirty-six he took *sannyasa*. Afterwards, when he became very famous, his father invited him to Kapilvastu. He went and stayed there; however, according to his custom, at 10 o'clock in the morning he would leave to beg for alms. His father asked, "Where are you going?" He replied, "I am going to beg for alms." His father said, "You are a *kshatriya*, a warrior from the Shakya dynasty, a prince from the royal family. How can you ask for alms?" He said, "No, I am not from the Shakya dynasty. I belong to the Buddha dynasty. It is my duty to ask for alms."

Lord Buddha had become so famous that powerful kings like Ajatshatru would bow at his feet. King Prasida from the Munger district would also bow at his feet. In spite of all this, why did he ask for alms? He could have asked anyone and people would have brought food with pleasure, but he would not do that. He left the path of comfort. The path of comfort is easy. Tomorrow, if you get twenty to twenty-five lakh rupees, you will change your lifestyle. You will want good clothes, a good car and a good house. Wealth changes a person, and so does knowledge, but the man who lives in the Supreme Spirit is not affected. Lord Buddha remained unmoved. Even at the age of eighty he would beg for alms.

Happiness is a state of mind. It has nothing to do with your wealth and money, home and family, wife and children, or cattle and horses. A happy man remains happy, and an unhappy man will always be unhappy, even if you give him a lot of money, a very big house and immense fame. Unhappiness is a form of complaint: "This is not happening, that is not happening." Unhappiness is dissatisfaction.

There was a Christian saint, St. Francis, in whose name a lot of convent schools are being run today. In his youth,

St. Francis used to work in the army. Once, he had a high fever. After the fever, his mind started spinning. He left his job in the army and went home. His father was a big thief. Wherever there were skirmishes, he would go and steal carpets, gold, silver, clothes, money, utensils, and so on, bring them home and sell them. When Francis came home, he saw that the people in his village were very poor, whereas his father had so many things. Francis started dropping all the things from the window. Whoever came, he would give him something or the other. His father became very angry with him and threw him out of the house. Francis left home and started building a church on a mountaintop. Later, he acquired ten to twelve disciples who helped him to make a very big church.

St. Francis' heart was so big that he used to say, "Do not keep anything with you. Whatever you have belongs to others. If they abuse you, give them love. Oh Lord, let me serve the person who harms me." These were his words. Mother Teresa was also like that. She was a citizen of Albania who became a nun in Ireland and then came to India. Therefore, the secret of happiness lies in a persons' way of thinking.

Will we have an opportunity to be born in Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga and Dwapara Yuga?

Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapara Yuga and Kali Yuga: these four ages are not outside you, they exist in your mind. Many people are in Satya Yuga, many are in Kali Yuga. I am in Satya Yuga even now. I have been in Satya Yuga all throughout my life. I always lived in Satya Yuga: at home, at Swami Sivananda's ashram and in Munger. Even here in Rikhia I live in Satya Yuga. The people around are also very simple and straight; they are also not living in Kali Yuga.

The principle of karma

Every *karma* or action creates a seed. You saw me five years ago and today when we met, you recognized me. Five years ago, my seed was planted somewhere in your mind. You may

call this remembrance or memory; it is a seed. Just as wheat or coriander has a seed, similarly a seed is created out of every karma. Some seeds die and some survive. The seed of the karma performed with attachment remains strong, and the seed of the karma performed without attachment dies; it does not have any effect. In Vedanta, this is referred to as the relationship between action and cause. You can also call it the system of karma; the egg comes from the chicken and the chicken from the egg. This will go on indefinitely unless either the chicken dies or the egg breaks. One karma is created out of another, and this system goes on perpetuating.

Karmas are of three types. One type of karma goes into fixed deposit. It is stored and is called *sanchita karma*. It does not bear fruit immediately; it bears fruit only at the time when it is meant to ripen. Mangoes do not ripen all throughout the year; they bear fruit only at the right time. A cucumber ripens only at the right time and so does wheat. Similarly, every karma ripens and bears fruit at the right time. The karmas you perform all get collected at one place and remain stored there. They will not bear fruit today, as the time is not right.

The second type of karma is that which is done today and also bears fruit today. It is called *kriyamana karma*. You deposit twenty rupees into a current account in a bank today, and withdraw it today. Similarly, you perform a karma today and you face the consequences today itself.

The third kind of karma is *prarabdha karma*. The happiness or unhappiness you are experiencing today is also karma. Someone is being born in your house, someone is dying, a lot of money is coming in or you are in dire poverty: this is also karma. This wealth and poverty, birth and death, or good and bad that you are receiving is called prarabdha. This is your destiny. This prarabdha karma is the fruit of past karma, and not only is it the fruit, it is also the reason for the next karma. It is not just an egg; it also has the potential to create a new chicken. In this way, prarabdha karma is an egg related to two chickens. One is the chicken that hatched the egg, and the second is the new chicken that the egg has the potential to

create. Prarabdha karma is the experience of the past karma and also the reason for the next karma.

Our learned sages have called these three karmas: sanchita karma, kriyamana karma and prarabdha karma. Sanchita karma is like a bullet loaded in a revolver. If you wish to, you can use it or you can keep it in your pocket to use later. It is under your control. In kriyamana karma your finger is on the trigger of the revolver; when you wish to pull it is within your control. However, you have no control over prarabdha karma. This bullet has already been fired. You have to face the consequences. Therefore, think of what you will do and how you will act in the future.

This is the basic principle of vedic philosophy. After thousands of years of study and research, our ancestors discovered what karma is; what you can consider karma, what it is that forms a seed. Cutting the grass is karma and so is picking up cow dung and putting it in a pit. Walking, sitting and hearing are all karmas. The *Bhagavad Gita* says that man cannot survive for even a second without performing karma. The question is, which karma becomes a seed and which does not?



Karma and kriya

Your whole life is a result of karma. Breathing, blinking the eyelids, listening with the ears, the digesting of food, the beating of the heart: your entire life is nothing but karma. Now, which is the karma that creates a seed? This is a very big question, and that is why two different words are used. One is kriya, the other is karma. What you are eating, or what you are smelling through the nose, is kriya, not karma. Karma is that which involves a person's ego. Whether it has to do with the house or the household, or with robbery and dacoity, fame and prestige, politics, or whatever else, where there is ego or the feeling of 'I', that is karma. The best definition of karma has been given by Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* which says that the work done by you with the desire for the fruit of the action is karma. If there is no desire for the fruit and you go on working, it is kriya.

Many years ago, we had a very good servant in the Munger ashram, an *adivasi* or tribal man from Ranchi. He used to do all kinds of work in the ashram. He would cook food and even look after the sick. If someone fell sick in the night, he would look after them and give them medicine, food and drink. One day, he got a letter from home saying his wife was sick. He became frightened. He came to me and said, "Swamiji, my wife is sick so I will go." I said, "Mangala, if you go home, who will do all the work here?" He said, "Swamiji, what can I do?" and saying so, he went away.

This is the difference between karma and kriya. People would fall sick here as well. Here also, he used to check the temperature, give hot water and stay awake all night. He would even know whether the patient had a headache, a stomachache, or a cold and fever. Nevertheless, this did not affect him at all. He did not receive any fruit of his work. He used to do it only in the spirit of *seva* or selfless service. It was his duty. This is called kriya. However, when he came to know about his wife, then it was not just duty; he started worrying about the outcome, "I don't know what will happen, I hope she doesn't die." Death is also a result, as is recovering from

a sickness. This man had hope of the result; that was karma. As soon as he got the letter, he was filled with the emotion of anticipation and it turned into karma. When it became karma, he started to feel worried and forgot about everything else. This is the only difference between karma and kriya. The difference is not in the action, but in the emotions and the mental attitude. Lord Krishna said the same thing to Arjuna in the the *Bhagavad Gita*. He said, “You should not be afraid to fight. Nothing will happen. Just think, ‘I am fighting.’ Do not involve your ego. This is your duty; you are a kshatriya and the chief of this army. You are very good at fighting, and if you run away from the battlefield, you will incur karma and be disgraced.”

To be free from karma, Sri Krishna has shown the simple way, which is to go on working and give up the desire for fruits (2:47):

*Karmanyevaadhikaraste maa phaleshu kadaachana;
Maa karmaphalaheturbhurmaa te sango'stvakarmani.*

Your right is to work only, but never to its fruits; let not the fruits of actions be your motive, nor let your attachment be to inaction.

In the phrase *Karmani eva adhikaraste*, he has made use of the singular form, *karmani*, which means a single karma. You have a right to karma only. This is within your capacity. No one can stop you from doing karma; however, you have no right over its fruits. It is within your right to plant a mango tree, but whether or not that tree bears fruit is beyond the scope of your rights. Forget about whether or not this will happen. In the phrase *Ma phaleshu kadaachana*, he has used the plural form, *phaleshu*, which means more than one fruit. If by chance you receive the fruits of your karma, do not become the enjoyer. *Ma karmaphalaheturbhur*: make someone else the enjoyer of the fruits. Whether you make the enjoyer your son or nephew, a blind man, an orphan or your guru, make someone else the recipient of the fruits.

A natural question arises here: if this is the case, why should you perform karma at all? When you have no right to the fruits of karma, when you do not even know whether the mango tree will bear fruit at all, why should you plant it? To this God says, *Maa te sango'stvakarmani* – “A person should also not be without karma.” Whether you receive the fruits or not, whether they are good or bad, whether I get them or someone else does, you have to perform karma. He says, “Arjuna, you have a right to karma, but not to its fruits. If by chance you get the fruits, make someone else the recipient. However, do not think, ‘In that case, why should I do karma?’ You have to do karma.” These are the four things Krishna said in this verse, and it is a summary of the whole *Bhagavad Gita*. This is the master key to the *Bhagavad Gita*, with which all locks open up. Whether you tend the crops, look after the cows, work at a job or do business; whatever it is that you do, do it, and do it to the best of your ability. What fruits you will receive from it is very difficult to predict; therefore, worrying about that is futile. If you worry, you will grow old fast.

Swamiji, in the case of mentally ill or mentally challenged people, there is no question of ego within them. When they get angry or do something, are they creating karma?

No, they do not create karma. They are born with an impediment. That is because they performed certain karmas in their past lives. There are a number of categories of karmas. Killing a child or a woman, robbing or burning someone's house, killing someone's animal: there are several such karmas, the fruit of which is predetermined. Why did he become mentally ill? For his entire life, all he does is eat and drink, get up and sit down, nothing more. What karma did he perform that his intellect is missing? It is possible he killed someone by choking him. He must have done something for which he has received the fruit in this life.

You will always receive the fruit; there are no two ways about it. This I know. To say, “My condition today is based solely on the strength of my effort and hard work” is not right.

To say, “I am a very worthy man, industrious, a good farmer, a very good shopkeeper or businessman and that is why I have earned money” is incorrect. You have attained that due to your prarabdha karma. You can deceive the court of law, but not yourself. The One who sees everything is sitting within. He resides in everything, making a register of everyone’s actions, so how can you deceive yourself?

You said once that even if you see or do something unknowingly it becomes karma; for example, the brahmin’s son saw a girl selling eggs by the roadside and dreamt he was eating the eggs. How did this happen?

No, it is not like that. Many things are done without you wanting to do them due to circumstances. For example, when an executioner hangs a criminal, if he looks on this as his duty then he will not incur the karma of killing. If he becomes happy that the criminal is dead, then it will create karma. Similarly, when a judge gives the death sentence, he definitely becomes the cause of the criminal’s death, but he does not receive its fruit because he did that within the boundary of his duty. He does not feel unhappy or happy. However, if the same judge is angry with that man and takes advantage of the opportunity to give an unfavourable verdict, then he becomes liable to pay for it, as his individuality and ego are present while making that decision. When karma carries ego, it bears fruit. Things done unknowingly or due to helplessness do not create karma. Take the soldier in the army who goes out to fight and fires a bullet. So many people die, but this is not his karma. It is kriya, as a soldier only does his duty.

The principle of karma is complicated; it is not that simple. It is the basis for the entire world. Creation continues only on its strength. In the summer, the water in the ocean rises up as steam. Nature is doing this karma. It becomes hot, the steam rises, the sun moves to the west, the weather turns slightly cold and there is precipitation. This means nature also has to perform karma. The sun does karma twenty-four hours a day; does it ever have a holiday? Yes, it has taken a vacation

once, when Rama was born. The sun was so astounded when it saw Rama that there was daylight for an entire month! Read the *Ramacharitamanas*, you will understand. Aside from this, nature never takes rest. Nothing in nature is without action. That is why this world is called *samsara*, meaning that which is constantly in motion – *Samsarati iti samsaarah*.

Do dreams destroy samskaras or are samskaras created from dreams also?

No, dreams do not create samskaras. Dreams are an album of samskaras that you look at.

In this country, the condition of women is a cause for concern. How can they be helped?

Women are making this world go around. Women are always sharp; more so than men. If a man instead of a woman had to go to the in-laws' house, he would commit suicide. He would not even be able to talk to anyone there; everyone from the oldest to the youngest person would ridicule him. However, when a woman goes to her in-laws' house, she lives like a governor. When she argues, she makes men break into a sweat. That is why our ancestors sent her to the in-laws' house. If a man was sharp, he would have been sent to the in-laws' house, but no, he would die there. If someone in the in-laws' house told a man to wash utensils, he would be bewildered, whereas a woman, upon arrival itself, would start cleaning the utensils and washing the clothes. A woman is quick, and a woman from the village has even more energy and vitality. A lot of mistakes have been made, which have to be set right at some time or another.

Women cannot exercise any legal, social or political rights in many places. If the husband dies, she cannot make use of his wealth and property unless she is clever; the brothers-in-law will throw her out. Where the women are well-educated and capable, they are able to safeguard their rights.

In all the ancient religions, whether it was Christianity, Islam, Judaism or Hinduism, the rights of women were

suppressed. In this country, when a man died, the woman had to commit *sati* or self-immolation, but if a woman died, the husband did not have to commit *sati*. If her husband died, the woman had to change her clothes, her whole identity, but no such thing applied to a man when the woman died. He could get married a second time. He did not need to have the approval of society. When a man died, the woman could not remarry. The marriage could take place only if society allowed it. This is unjust, and women have to still suffer due to this injustice. In spite of this, a woman is very quick and sharp.

If women obtain justice, if they acquire equal rights, there will be growth in wealth and knowledge, and a good influence in the house since the way in which a woman can look after the house cannot be accomplished by a man. If a man enters the kitchen of another house, he will add salt instead of sugar to the tea! He does not know these things at all. Everything will be done in a topsy-turvy manner. A woman can look after the house very well, even with limited money, as she is alert.

We should all get together to discuss and deliberate the way to redress the injustice we have meted out to women. A woman is not just for enjoyment; this is a fact. In ancient times, the relationship between a man and woman was only for the purpose of creating offspring. A woman is not an object of enjoyment; she gives birth to life. A woman is a mother; she is the one who gives the first impressions to the child, both good and bad. The meaning of mother is 'the first guru'. The first word a child utters is 'Ma'. That is why the giver of life is called Ma. When a child is born, he does not say 'father' first. The father serves no purpose for the child at all. In western countries, the child of an unwed mother sometimes does not even know who the father is. The mother is everything for the child, from beginning to end.

Whatever a child learns up until the age of seven is the real learning. You may call it psychology, or the teachings of the scriptures, or just my wisdom. The truth is, after seven years of age, a child does not learn, he only acquires information

from external sources. If his impressions are good then he contemplates, he is self-controlled, he does something only after careful consideration. These habits are given only by the mother. The good impressions are taught only by the mother until the age of seven, as firstly, he stays with the mother, secondly, he drinks her milk, thirdly, he receives her love and fourthly, he understands everything she says. The mother and child know each other's language.

The same is the case with dogs. After six months, a dog will not learn anything new; even if you try to teach him something. Where to excrete and where not to, where to urinate and where not to, where to sit and where not to sit; all this has to be taught within six months or else however much you scold him, he will not learn anything. He will not understand at all. This is the same case with you. You know certain things are bad, yet you are unable to leave them. Why? It is because you were not taught by the age of seven that, "Two things exist in grain: rice and chaff. Keep the rice and throw the chaff." This discrimination was never taught to you.

The mother teaches a child how to discriminate, which enables him to distinguish between right and wrong, truth and falsehood. Therefore, in today's age, it is extremely necessary for a woman to be educated and self-reliant. This is a certainty. If nothing else, a woman should at least work as a nurse for six months or she should be a peon in a school. A peon gets about eleven to twelve hundred rupees a month. She will feel confident that she too is capable of earning money.

There are two ways to make money: to earn it and to save it. Only then will it make an impression on the children. If a mother is illiterate, what will the children learn? "She gives only milk and kisses and takes us in her arms." Is that all that a mother should do? The mother must give a child good impressions and teach good behaviour. This is a fact you should never forget.

Satsang 15

24 September, 1997



Many years ago, India was known as the ‘golden bird’, the way America is known as the ‘land of golden opportunities’ today. People used to come here from Central Asia to earn their living. India was known as Dwaba then. In Sanskrit, water is called *apa*, and from that, the word ‘aba’ is formed. The meaning of *Dwaba* is ‘two waters’, that of the Ganga and the Yamuna. The region between two rivers is considered very fertile. At that time, they rarely used the word ‘Hindustan’; they would generally say, “Let’s go to Dwaba.”

People from other countries did not know much about the southern part of India. The South became known when the Jews went there after fleeing from their country. Even

at that time it was not that well known; however, when the Jesuit priests came to Surat they learnt about South India. Previously, they used to equate India with just North India. People did not even know about Kolkata. People knew more about Thailand, Burma and Indonesia than they did about Kolkata and Orissa.

People used to come here from Turkey, Afghanistan and other such countries. At that time, Afghanistan was a part of India. Even today, some Buddhist memorials are found in Afghanistan, demonstrating that the Buddhist religion was prevalent there. A part of Iran was also included in India. Maharana Sanga, who was from the dynasty of Maharana Pratap in Rajasthan, would take the army up to Iran. Maharana Sanga fought so many battles that he had more than eighty scars on his body. Guru Nanaka went right up to Mecca.

Iran's relationship with India is very old. Ashoka's daughter, Sanghamitra, and her son, Mahendra, had visited Iran to spread Buddhism; the two were even attacked there. The Buddhist religion was fairly widespread in Iran. The ancient religion of Iran is very similar to the Vedas. They worship fire, which is constantly burning in their temples. Even today there are fire temples in Mumbai and Navsari. This former religion of Iran was called Zoroastrianism. The race that still follows it is called Parsi, their prophet was Zarathustra and their holy book is the *Zend Avesta*. They too have evening prayers and they also wear the *janeu*, the sacred thread; however, they wear it around the waist like a girdle. The names of their gods are similar to Soma, Agni, Indra, and others found here.

Was there a visa system in the earlier days to control the entry and exit of people?

Earlier there was no visa system. People used to be stopped by the army. For example, the Parsis came here after fleeing from Iran. All the important people there got into boats and fled in thousands. They reached the shores of Gujarat, where they were stopped. Their leader spoke to the king of Gujarat

about their circumstances and said they wanted shelter. It has always been a principle in India that if a person asking for refuge is turned away thinking, 'It may not be good for us', it is a sin. When a person seeking shelter comes to you, you should not even think about the benefits or disadvantages. It is a sin to do so. Therefore, the king of Gujarat could not say no. He sent a glass full of milk to the leader of the Parsis. When the leader saw the glass he just mixed some sugar in it and returned it. The meaning of this was that our people and yours will live together peacefully; we will sweeten your life, not destroy it. A compromise was arrived at by the two of them, agreeing that Parsis would not propagate their religion, rather they would keep it within their own community, and they would not eat beef. Of course, now Parsis do eat beef. Ultimately these rules were formed and Navsari was given to them as freehold land. They built a fire temple there and their chief priest, farmers and businessmen began living there.

In earlier times, there was no visa system. People used to enter a country and stop others from entering by the use of force. When people came to India they would be given an area and told, "You can live here. This is your land. You can cultivate it, carry out business or do whatever you like with it, but you must stay within your area. If you want to trade with us, these are the rules." The original inhabitants would be told not to meet them or have any relationship with them. This is how the caste system began. The outsiders would be kept out of the mainstream of society. Whenever the need arose, they would take in forty to fifty of them to do the work of sweepers, leather-workers, washermen or servants; however, they had to stay within their area. They were not allowed to stay with the rest. This was the rule in earlier days; other people were not allowed to live within the society of the original inhabitants. This is not the custom in cities, but it still exists in the villages. The area of the *kshatriyas* or warriors is separate from that of the *vaishyas* or merchants, and so on. Everyone lives in separate areas. This way there are less fights, since each of these sections has a different way of thinking and conduct.

In India everyone was kept separate, as everyone's lifestyle was different. The kshatriyas are rowdy. They will eat, drink, fight and indulge in violence. The *brahmins*, the priestly caste, with their tuft of hair and ceremonial thread, will say, "Don't touch this and don't touch that." If a girl was widowed or did something wrong, the brahmins used to perform her shraaddha ceremony. I don't know what happens now, but in the olden days if a brahmin's daughter got pregnant with an unknown man's child, she was thrown out of the house and after that her father would perform her *shraaddha*, her funeral rites. They used to call it Ghat Shraaddha. If there are people from other communities living within such a community, there are bound to be fights. Every community has its own customs and practices, therefore it is best to keep them at a distance from each other.

Even today, isn't it difficult for people of different cultures to live all together in a flat in the cities? It would be very difficult for a Punjabi, an Anglo-Indian and a Muslim to live together in one flat. Our ancestors knew all this and that is why different castes were kept separate. In ancient times, the brahmins were not ready to meet the kshatriyas; even the kshatriyas were considered untouchables. However, the brahmins needed the kshatriyas to fight battles, and the one who has a sword in his hand will also rule the land. The kshatriyas got around the brahmins due to the strength of their swords. The vaishyas always have money. The one who has money is always in great demand. The brahmins relaxed their rules for them also. Last names like Varma, Shrivastava and others came into being from marriages arranged amicably between brahmins, kshatriyas and vaishyas.

All this exists in Europe as well. It is not apparent in cities; however, in villages there are a lot of distinctions based on race and class. Indians are not aware of this since they only go there to work or study. If you live in one of the villages, you will know. They do not like you to burn incense sticks. They raise an objection if you ring a bell or blow a conch. If you use spices in your cooking, the people in the next flat will object.

Satsang 16

25 September 1997



God's giving nature

God is kind-hearted towards the unfortunate and the poor; He is the ocean of mercy. He has done so much for humankind. He has given man birth, wisdom, strength, intelligence and knowledge; He has given everything. God has given so many things that have been misused by people, yet God has not stopped giving. He does not say, "I have given man so many things, but he misbehaves and so I will stop giving." No. He says, "Keep giving." If He gives a child to a righteous person, he also gives a child to a wicked person. He gives wealth to a righteous person and also to a wicked person. The righteous and wicked are both kept alive until the age of eighty or ninety.

What this means is He has been kind to everyone. He does not think, 'This person is wicked' and stop giving to him. This is my principle also. I think, 'If I do any good for someone and they misuse it, let them.' This has become my nature. What else should the nature of a human being be?

A sadhu was taking a bath in the Ganga. At that time, a scorpion came swimming along. The sadhu caught hold of it to take it out of the river. As soon as he caught it, the scorpion stung him and fell back into the river. The sadhu caught it again. This sequence was repeated three or four times. The fourth time, a passerby said, "This is a poisonous scorpion, let it die." The sadhu replied, "If the scorpion does not abandon its nature, why should I abandon mine?"

This is the truth of life. This is the perspective that you should adopt and live according to this principle; otherwise, you will have to suffer a lot in life. If we do not adopt this principle, we will feel sad that we gave a needy person a cow or a car, a bicycle or a house, but they have sold it. A lot of people mind this, but I don't.

This is God's rule and this should also be the rule of working for others. One does not perform benevolent acts to get something in return. When you do some good for someone, you don't do it thinking that he will do good for you as well. Whatever good is done, it is done with the feeling of selflessness, without expecting any returns. That way, whether someone is good or bad has no relevance to you.

Three qualities make the world

The world is not only made up of good people; there are both good and bad people here. If the world had only good people, there would be no joy in life. If you ate only sweets, there would be no fun in that. Spicy, bitter, tangy, all these flavours should be part of your food. There are seven flavours; if there were only one, the food would be tasteless. Everyone would fall sick. In the same way, an orchard should have all kinds of trees: mango, guava, jackfruit, orange, everything should be there.

God's creation has three qualities or *gunas*: *sattwaguna*, meaning peaceful; *rajoguna*, meaning constantly active; and *tamoguna*, meaning big crooks! It is said that the proportion of the *gunas* vary in Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapara Yuga and Kali Yuga. In Kali Yuga, *tamoguna* has the greatest proportion, *rajoguna* has a lesser portion, and *sattwaguna* a very small portion. When cooking dal, you do not put the same measure of water and salt. If you put a kilo of salt in a kilo of water, what kind of dal will you get? In the same way, there is a little *sattwaguna* in a person, a little bit more of *rajoguna* and a lot of *tamoguna*.

This body is based on *tamoguna*. Its diet is *tamoguni*, not *sattwaguni*. If you have only *sattwaguna* in you, you will experience depression. I saw many mahatmas in Rishikesh. I saw depression in all those who had a greater proportion of *sattwaguna*. Nothing negative happens to you because you are a *rajoguni*, full of *rajoguna*. The only thing is that with a predominance of *rajoguna*, the blood pressure is a bit high; that is all.

Economic growth

A child becomes capable and proficient only when he becomes independent. Look at the discoveries in science: the railway, motorcars, electricity, satellites, computers, airplanes. Two hundred years ago, could one imagine that in six hours you could go from here to another continent and while flying in the air, you could eat, sleep, use the toilet and speak on the telephone? One could not even imagine such a thing. Why is it that the West has made so much progress and Indians are lagging behind? After all, we also have brains. We are not donkeys.

Our guardians, our elders and our society have tied us down. A person who is a slave of society is not able to progress as he has a big obstacle before him. Children, parents, households, farms, shops, relatives, these are all obstacles. A person cannot move ahead; his feet are tied. This is why Asia has not progressed. Even now, there is no opportunity for

progress. What is happening in Asia now, that which is called 'free economy' or 'the global market', serves the interests only of those who are initiating this process. They are the ones benefiting from it, not us. They are creating markets for themselves.

Trade has three principles. The principle of earlier times was to attack another country and take control of it, impoverish it. In this case, no trade can be carried out. If your neighbours are wealthy you can sell them goods. If you destroy or bankrupt your neighbours, to whom will you sell your goods? This is why a different principle is used now: if you want to trade somewhere, first increase their economic power. These days, China has a bigger economy than India. That is the reason more people go there for business. Tradesmen do not go to countries that have a poor economy. Almost no one goes to Africa for business; there is no economy at all. Imagine that a company opens here in Rikhia. Is there an economy here? When nobody here can afford to buy a fan, torchlight, a good quality raincoat, beautiful gumboots, television sets, steel cupboards or refrigerators, what will you do? First improve its economy; then trade can take place. This is the first principle of western trade.

The second principle is to work in those places where labour is cheap. Only then can you compete in the world. Labour is very cheap in China.

There is a third principle: the government should have good control over the country. India is considered the world's largest democracy; however, the government has no actual control over the people. Government control is weak. In China, the rule is very strong. People cannot say anything; they are promptly thrown into jail if they express any dissent. When there is good discipline in a country, traders like to conduct business there. The trader wants security for his wealth and profits. When workers go on strike all the time, it is no good. They want a government that deals firmly with striking workers. Just saying, "Our country has complete democracy" is not good enough. The government should

be strong and secure. The owner of the house should have control over the members of the household.

Lord Shiva burnt Kamadeva to ashes for creating a disturbance in his sadhana. What is the spiritual significance of this event?

When you see gold or a diamond, you experience greed because that object has attracted you. If that object was not gold or diamond, you would not experience greed. In the same way, a beautiful dancing lady, a garden of flowers, waterfalls and forests give birth to the experience of desire in the mind. This desire is within you, but these things have awakened it. It has set five arrows upon you.

Diamonds and gold are the physical manifestations of greed; a woman or a man are the manifest forms of desire. This is the meaning of Kamadeva. *Kama* means wish, desire, passion. In this context, what is the meaning of ‘deva’? What is the meaning of *lobha deva*, ‘god of greed’, or *krodha deva*, ‘god of anger’? When you see an enemy and get angry, you become the god of anger. Anger and greed are not as powerful forces; Kamadeva, god of passion, is a much more powerful enemy. That is why his name appears more often. Shiva did not burn the god of greed or the god of anger; only Kamadeva was burnt. How many types of wishes exist? So many: the wish for progeny, the wish for a family line, the wish for wealth, the wish for land and home, the wish for a car or a television.

Kamadeva’s meaning is not limited to relations between men and women only. Kamadeva is related to money, children and women. The desire for these three relate to Kamadeva. In this context, the word ‘woman’ refers to both men and women; man desires woman and woman desires man. Each person experiences these three types of desires often and they are called kama. This is written in our scriptures.

While Lord Shiva was performing austerities, his consciousness was in samadhi, which means that he was unaware of all external things. He was meditating upon his *ishta devata*, personal deity, Rama, and he could not see

anything else. In such a state, no desire can awaken a person; only the desire for a woman can pierce the mind because it has a lot of power. It is such a big power that no man can save himself from it. In the words of Kabirdas:

*Maayaa mahaa thagini hama jaani;
Tiraguna phaansa liye kara dolai bolai madhuri baani.
Kesava ke kamalaa hvai baithee, teeratha me bhai paanee.
Jogee ke jogina hvai baithee, kaahu ke kaudee kaanee.
Bhagatan ke bhagatina hvai baithee, Brahma ke Brahmaanee.*

Maya, illusion, has not even spared Purusha and Prakriti. All of creation is the result of just that. The whole of creation has been born from the relations between man and woman. Were these five billion people in the world born just like that? Did they just drop out of the sky? All these dogs, donkeys, insects, birds, how were they born?

Maya is a very big *shakti*, power. This is the only power that could disturb Shiva. The other devas, the god of greed, the god of anger, could not do anything. At that time Shiva was single; Sati had immolated herself. Kamadeva was told, “Disturb his *dhyana*, his meditation,” so he set about to do so. Shiva promptly burnt him to ashes. Kamadeva’s wife Rati was distraught. Shiva said to her, “Kama’s body has been burnt and he will now remain without a body. He will now work through the body of others.”

This is a way of explaining something; it is a symbolic story. Shiva is God himself; Kamadeva is nothing for him. However, in order to make people understand something, he acted out this *lila* or play so that people conduct themselves with caution. Those who walk the path towards *moksha*, liberation, or those who wish to cultivate spiritual qualities in life need to have control over their senses. These senses must be watched very carefully. This is the purpose of the story. That which can disturb or sway you is something inside you. Desire does not inhabit a woman, nor does greed live in gold, or anger in the enemy; these are all our internal *samskaras* that manifest through the medium of the senses. The reference

to Kamadeva not having a body is a caution to stay alert, for even if the enemy is not visible, you are still at risk; you are still in danger.

What is the difference between attachment and love? How can one decide where love ends and where attachment begins?

In the world today, ideas that become popular come first from the West. The West has made this word 'love' very popular; they have turned it into a card covered with hearts! Love means the feeling of intimacy a person experiences towards another. A mother experiences intimacy towards her child; this is called *vatsalya* or parental sentiment. A brother experiences closeness with his sister, which is referred to as affection. What a compassionate person feels towards a poor, needy person is called pity or mercy, and the feeling a man experiences towards a woman is called attachment. These are all different forms of love.

Just as milk can be used to make rasagullas, rasamalai or pedha, the feelings that are within a person manifest at different times, in different situations, with different force and in different ways. When you are faced with an enemy you feel hatred. The presence of a friend evokes feelings of friendship. Affection surfaces when your sister is in front of you. You feel pity for a person who is in grief, attachment for a woman, *vatsalya* for a son, respect for guru and devotion for God. These are all forms of the one feeling of love. Love means the feeling of intimacy one feels towards another, whatever form it takes.

The word 'love' has been popularized by the West, as in the Bible love is believed to be the central teaching of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was the embodiment of love and he preached about love. He said, "Love your neighbours as you love yourself."

Nowadays everyone talks of love, yet no one really understands what this means. It is very difficult to love in this world. Some people say love is that which is selfless. The

funny thing is that those who are selfless have no love in them! When I have nothing to do with you, why would I love you? What need do I have to love you? The foundation of love is the self. Love is not for another; it is for oneself. It is for one's own joy that one loves. People say love is selfless just for the sake of saying it; however, the selfless people I have seen do not have any love in them. They are very dry.

Some say love ties you down; some say it is a trap in which one gets caught; some say love is nothing, just a figment of the imagination; and some say love is an internal process of attraction.

Many times love becomes the cause of sorrow.

Yes, we can see how many people in the world commit suicide due to love. Many run away from home. Love is the cause of all this. Love comes from a selfish cause. Love does not exist without selfishness. Only God and a mother love without selfishness. Other than them, whether it is your father or sister, daughter or anyone else, there is a little bit of selfishness in every kind of love. Many people have this opinion and I also think this way.

Even the mother loves with the expectation that the child will be a support in her old age.

No, I have not had any such experience. A mother believes it is her right to love her child; she prays for the child's progress and gives him the instruction to walk along the right path. She definitely wishes that her son or daughter would get married, that they would have children; however, she has no expectation. Having a wish, as opposed to an expectation, is a different thing. There has been a lot of contemplation on this; I have also given it a lot of thought.

When I was leaving my home, I did not say anything to my mother. She was a member of the Congress Party and was in jail at that time. I asked my father and he said, "Okay, go." I said, "I will leave after meeting mother." Father answered, "Don't meet her. She will tell you, 'Don't go' and you will

stay back.” I then asked my maternal grandmother who was present at that time. She said, “No, your mother will not stop you.” This discussion went on between us for some time and in the end, I did not go to meet my mother.

A mother has nothing to do with a son’s success or failure. The mother is only a representation of love toward her child. What she is toward others, is a different matter. Her feelings change a great deal when it comes to her daughter-in-law, yet she has unconditional love towards her child. She always looks upon the child as her own, regardless of whether he is a thief, a dacoit, a murderer, a sadhu, a great soul, a wise one, or whatever else. Even if the child is very sick, if they have leprosy or some other horrible disease, a mother will never feel repulsion or fear. I have seen this with my own eyes. I used to go to the leper’s colony and I saw the women there; they felt no fear. Scientists the world over agree to this and all mothers also believe this. However, it is this very quality that can make the child weak. If you ask me, children do not belong to their father at all. By law the children belong to the father; they use the father’s name. However, in reality, the child belongs only to the mother. You can see this in all of creation; it is not only humans. Look anywhere: dogs, horses, donkeys, cows, goats, tigers, elephants, camels or birds; in every case, the babies belong to the mother. The father is nowhere to be seen. He knows nothing about the children.

In ancient times, our seers understood this. That is why they have never used the word ‘fatherland’ anywhere; ‘motherland’ is the word used. In vedic times, children were named after their mother: Vinata’s son, Vainateya; Kaushalya’s son, Kaushaleya. Later, as society slowly started changing, men gained more importance. When this happened, they claimed rights over land, legal rights over children; all kinds of legal rights went into their hands. Now, the wheel of time is turning. Laws are changing. In countries like Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland, the children belong to the mother; the father has no standing in the eyes of the law.

Yes, they live together, but they have no legal right over the children. This is the case in Australia as well. Slowly, this is taking place everywhere. Gradually, it is happening in India also. In America, England and Germany there are some very wealthy women. They are capable of supporting the family all on their own. Many of the big trusts in America include women as their trustees.

I have never uttered a single word against women. What is the use of being a fraud? I have great regard for women. I am impressed with their shakti; their wealth, intelligence and beauty have also impressed me. What is not right about this? After all, was not my mother also a woman? She must have been beautiful and intelligent. She must have given me some good guidance because I did not remain ignorant or an idiot. When I can respect my mother, then I can also respect other women. This is the reason why I have never spoken or written anything against women.

A lot of people write that ‘woman is the fire pit and man is the stream of ghee’, but I do not accept this. If you want to function in this world or have a good atmosphere at home, you need to have good relations with the women around you. You should behave well with women because a woman represents motherhood. In southern India, even a little girl is called *Amma*, mother.

Whenever we perform any rituals, chanting or meditation, we always begin by saying: *Sada Bhavani dahini sammukha rahen Ganesha. Panchadeva rakhsha karen Brahma Vishnu Mahesha*. There is a reference only to four devas, the name of the fifth deva is not here. Why is this?

All five names are there: Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Ganesha and Bhavani. Panchadeva does not mean that devis are not included. Deva means god, and among gods or divine beings, the difference of gender does not exist. The differentiation is our interpretation. We have males and females among us, so we assume that must be true for that realm also.

Satsang 17

26 September 1997



The language of *Ramacharitamanas* is Bundelkhandi. In southern Uttar Pradesh there is a district, Jhansi, where there is village called Rajapur. Rajapur is the birthplace of Tulsidas, and the language spoken there is Bundelkhandi. They speak Bundelkhandi in Panna, Jhansi and Katni, while towards Rewa it is Baghelkhandi. There is a little difference between them. This is why we see a mixture of many languages in the *Ramacharitamanas*. There is Maithili, Urdu and old

English, for example *neeyare* means near. There is Persian and Kumaoni also. When Hanuman was sitting on the tree and Ravana came there, it is written: *Taru pallava mahun rahaa lukaai* – “Concealing himself amid the leaves of the tree.” In Kumaoni, *lukna* means to hide.

In the *Ramacharitamanas* you will find the best expression of language. Even if you do not consider the *Ramacharitamanas* a spiritual book, it will still be counted among excellent literature. The words, the descriptions, the expressions used are exceptional. The moment when Sita and Rama come face-to-face in the garden is described so beautifully by Tulsidas in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

Lochana maga Raamahi ura aanee, deenhe palaka kapaata sayaani.

Receiving Sri Rama into the heart through the passage of the eyes, she cleverly shut him up there by closing the doors of her eyelids.

He has written about what they portray in the movies nowadays. In the cinemas you see a boy and girl sitting in front of each other, looking at each other, as feelings arise in them, but Tulsidas has written about this with such skill. He has depicted it so well. The idea is that when you write any literature, the depiction of the nine different emotions must not break social propriety.

Society also has its values. Nowadays, a father and daughter cannot go and watch a movie together. This is because in present-day films there is no regard for social limits of acceptability. In the *Ramacharitamanas*, a young man and young woman lock eyes, feelings stir in the heart, their friends are teasing them; yet Tulsidas adheres to social propriety. This is very difficult. He says (1:231:1):

*Chitvati chakita chahun disi Seetaa,
Kahan gaye nripakisora manu chintaa*

Sita looked in wonder all around. Her mind was at a loss as to where the princes had gone.

Such a beautiful description! From beginning to end, the *Ramacharitamanas* is excellent from a literary viewpoint.

The narrative of the *Ramacharitamanas* is undoubtedly written from a political point of view. Tulsidas has used the book for several purposes. One was that he brought an end to the rift between the Shaivite and Vaishnavite sects. At one time there used to be a lot of strife between these two sects. The *Ramacharitamanas* put an end to all that. Tulsidas said, “Shiva and Rama are friends. Shiva himself narrated the entire *Ramacharitamanas* to Parvati, so what is your problem?” Tulsidas also described the atrocities of the Mughal rule through the medium of Ravana. In a sense, the *Ramacharitamanas* described the entire political scenario of those times.

During the exile, Rama told Sita that she was going to be kidnapped and therefore she should enter into fire. Later he subjected her to the fire test again. What is the significance of these events?

There are a lot of episodes in the *Ramacharitmanas* that Tulsidas has written with mixed feelings. He did not want to write about certain things; however, as they are such well known episodes, people would have been critical if they were not written about.

You are talking about the episode when Rama asked Sita to enter into fire. After the war, the fire returned her back to Rama. This episode is present here because it indicates the ideal for women many thousands of years ago in India. A woman was not supposed to be touched by any man other than her husband. All other males were father, brother or son to her. This was the highest virtue of the vedic times.

This point of view has been held as a norm from ancient times, so how could Sita be an exception? Even though nothing happened between Ravana and Sita, he did kidnap her and take her away. Whether he carried her on his shoulders, took her by the hand, or by some other means, he did touch her; this is the objectionable part. Consequently, to remove this objection, the religious people added this episode to the

beginning of the *Ramayana*. They said, “That was not Sita at all, as the real Sita had already gone into the fire.” From ancient times, fire has been the witness to the relationship between man and woman. That is why fire was made a part of this episode.

Tulsidas was compelled to include this episode, as otherwise people would be critical. He did not, however, write the episode of Luv and Kush. He did not write anything about the giving up of Sita in Uttarakanda. He has written a totally different story in Uttarakanda. He did hint about this episode in two or three places, where he talks about a public outcry against Rama in Ayodhya. There is just a fleeting reference to this, just a slight hint. The outcry in relation to Sita, Rama’s sacrifice of Sita, Sita going to Valmiki’s ashram, the birth of Luv and Kush, then Luv and Kush fighting in the ashwamedha yajna, all this has been removed from Uttarakanda in the *Ramacharitamanas*, and instead he brought in the entire *Kakabhushundi Ramayana*.

The *Kakabhushundi Ramayana* is very good; there are very good ideas and philosophies in it. Bhakti and knowledge, worship of the formless God and also of God with form, all these topics are very well explained. In Tulsidas’ version, Uttarakanda has become a happy episode. It is very nice to read Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, yet when one comes to the part about Sita being sacrificed, it feels very sad and one doesn’t want to read any more. It is such a sad ending! The *Tulsi Ramayana* has a happy ending.

Swamiji, I have a *Tulsi Ramayana* in which there is a whole chapter on Luv and Kush.

It must be an interpolation; Tulsidas did not write it. He has described the topics covered in the *Ramacharitamanas* within the work itself. He indicates that there are no episodes of Luv and Kush in it. He mentions in Uttarakanda that Rama had two sons who were very brave, very polite, and had an ocean of good qualities. Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna also had two sons each:

*Doubijae binaee guna mandira. Hari pratibimba manahun ati sundara
Dui dui suta saba bhraatanha kere. Bhaye roopa guna seela ghanere.*

Both these boys were victorious in battle, modest, accomplished and handsome, the very images, as it were, of Hari. Rama's other brothers had two sons each, pre-eminent in comeliness of form, merit and virtue.

Did Shatrughna not have any son until Rama returned from exile?

The child was born later.

In the chapter on Luv and Kush, there is a mention that Shatrughna fought Lavanasura with the help of his two sons. Later, when Shatrughna fought Luv and Kush, Sita's sons were just ten-year-old children. Doesn't that mean Shatrughna's sons were older than Sita's sons?

As I said, Tulsidas did not write this; it was added on later. The *Ramacharitamanas* was written about four to five hundred years ago. At that time, vedic dharma was on the decline. The Mughal empire had been established in India. Idol worship, worship of a god with form, and other vedic ideas were being negated. The kings of Rajputana were becoming weak and everyone was bowing down to the Mughal empire. Nobody was opposing it. Everyone had begun living in comfort. The Mughals were free to do as they pleased. At times such as these when the king is unable to protect the dharma or the nation, the sadhus and sannyasins take this task into their own hands.

That was the time when saints like Mirabai, Tulsidas, Kabirdas, and Surdas lived. These saints were all born in the same century and they all emphasized bhakti. This was because Islam placed a lot of emphasis on bhakti, and they did not oppose Islam. They did not preach any religion that was opposed to Islam. Devotion of the divine is supreme, whether it is of Rama or of Shiva. At that time, many renowned saints undertook to tell the stories of Rama and Krishna, sing bhajans about them and discuss them. They searched for the perfect being from all the stories. That hero turned out to

be Rama for Tulsidas. Slowly people began listening to the stories, singing the *Ramayana* and performing Ramalilas. In this manner, gradually there was an awakening of dharma in the hearts of people.

Surdas propagated Krishna's character. Mira focused on love for Krishna. Tulsidas preached Rama bhakti, and he also brought in Shiva, as the kings of those times were Shaivite. This is the historical aspect. Sadhus and saints are mindful of history; however, they do not take the path of politics. They take another path. After all, what is politics? "People should listen to what we say. They should follow what we say", this is politics. Why go only along that path? There are other ways of getting ideas across. It is these other ways that sadhus and saints adopt.

Gradually, Mira's bhajans were sung everywhere; *Ramacharitamanas* kathas were held in every village. Nowadays the tradition is dying out; however, in my childhood *Ramacharitamanas* was recited in villages every day. Even illiterate people memorized the *Ramacharitamanas* just by listening to it so often.

Along with this, another book became very popular in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and used to be recited in the monsoon season. The two protagonists of this book were Aalha and Udal. This was a story of warriors and swords. Aalah was very beautiful and Udal was very brave. In the days of the monsoon when they sat somewhere and sang, all the princesses would fall under their spell and there would be fights. This was not a religious book. It was about fights, wars between kings, falling in love with princesses and the kidnapping of princesses. All this was described in that book and everyone recited it.

In those days I was in Almora. At the Bageshwar temple there was a big platform and they used to stage the Ramalila there. Each year people would come from all over the place. In Kumaon, it is very difficult to walk on foot; it takes five or six hours to reach any place. However, during the nine days of the Ramalila, Almora would be completely packed. A few

years later, the famous dancer Uday Shankar came to Almora. He opened his cultural centre where he started showing the *Ramayana* in a different form, as shadow play. They made a huge stage in the northeast of Almora, and there they would stage the shadow play. One person would sing the *Ramayana* and the song would be depicted through shadows. This used to take place during Ashwin Navaratri.

Was there rasalila also?

The rasalila takes place even now. The rasalila of Mathura is very famous. It presents Radha and Krishna in the form of a girl and a boy. Wherever rasalila was performed, a little girl would play Radha and a little boy would play Krishna. There were many rasalila troupes. Just as there are Ramalila troupes in Ayodhya, there are rasalila troupes in Mathura and Vrindavan. However, the authentic rasalila takes place in Saurashtra. In that, there is neither Radha nor Krishna. There is no person, yet it is the rasalila that Krishna used to perform with *dandiya*, sticks. It is called dandiya rasa. Throughout Saurashtra there are dandiya companies. They are located in other places as well, such as in South India. In Kerala they do communal kirtan. They light a tall lamp and women stand all around it, begin with the kirtan of Vighnavinayaka Ganesha, clap and dance.

In Ayodhya, each home has a *Ramayana mandali*, a group that goes out and performs kathas or dance dramas based on the *Ramayana*. That is their occupation. There are thousands of mandalis in Ayodhya. They all do Ramayana kathas and sing kirtan and bhajan. The father plays the harmonium, the son plays the tabla and the mother does the katha. The Ramayana mandalis of Ayodhya are most in demand in Bihar.

Doing kathas, whether they are Rama kathas, Krishna lilas, garba or dandiya rasa, all this is big business in India. Whether you go to Kerala in South India, Kolkata or Bengal, villages have katha and kirtan. This is a very big business; it feeds many people. Nowadays they are done in a better way than before. Earlier only one person would do the katha;

now it is not like that. Along with the kathakar, a harmonium, tabla, sitar, guitar, mridanga, cymbals and a second speaker are included. They travel together, they have a big group and those who are better known are more sought after.

Ever since TV and cinema have come, all this has changed.

No, even now there is a class in society that does not go to the cinema.

Watching films on the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Raja Harishchandra* and other such subjects gives a lot of joy, which is not found in the films of today.

Raja Harishchandra, Savitri-Satyavan, Nala-Damayanti, and other such stories, were actual events. They occurred sometime in the past and stories began to be told by people. Raja Nala gambled, lost everything and went into the forest with his wife and son. The wife was bitten by a snake in the forest and he left her there and went away. Then he went somewhere else, got a job and began cooking to support himself. This is a rather commonplace story. Before long, it was embellished and many more things were added to it. There was some king who gambled, had to leave his kingdom, his wife went to her mother's house, he also went away somewhere and later they met and recognized each other. That is all the truth there is to the story; the rest of it is all added on by the writer's imagination.

There is a lot of difference between a simple story and the story when it is changed into a play. For instance, in the *Ramacharitamanas*, Rama kills Taraka and it is described in two lines, whereas in a play it will take fifteen minutes. In a play, the storytelling takes longer. Many elements are added which have an impact on the viewer. In literature it is language that has an influence and in plays it is the acting and the visuals.

All these stories are not only for entertainment; there is an objective behind them. When you are building a house, you ensure there is good craftsmanship for the walls, roof, floor, doors and windows. This is its foundation, its architecture

and design. In the same way, while its main objective is social, there is an art to storytelling. Whoever is mentioned in that becomes immortal.

Great people are born in all ages. Even today, there are many famous people. The government and the world gives them much respect, but will their deeds, actions and words be remembered and be useful to people a thousand years from now? Rama lived his life according to the highest social ideals. Thousands of years later, people felt that this person's life should be made known to everyone. It is good for society, for the family. Men, women, parents and children will benefit from it. It will good for stepmothers and also for rascals. It is of the first order! This is why Rama is immortal.

Mahatma Gandhi's life was also very good. Will he also become immortal?

I have read about Gandhiji and also seen him. His lifestyle was not that of an ordinary person. Even though you and I might exercise restraint, does the average person do so? People eat and drink and make merry. Mahatma Gandhi's lifestyle was extraordinary and his political principles were of a very high level. What Gandhiji said was also said by Buddha and Mahavira. His slogan was that of non-violence: 'Ahimsa is the highest dharma.' A lot of people liked this. They thought, 'If the fighting stops, it will be a good thing. People are dying for nothing, women are becoming widows, children are being orphaned.' Everyone accepted the principle of non-violence wholeheartedly.

Lord Buddha's philosophy received great acceptance. When King Ashoka slaughtered lakhs of soldiers in Orissa and returned to Pataliputra, he went into depression. He returned from there as a totally transformed person. He changed his political philosophy, adopted non-violence and discarded all arms and weapons. Buddhist rules began to be applied in Ashoka's kingdom.

In addition to the five principles or *panchasheel* of Buddhism, such as 'I will not consume alcohol, I will not

gamble', there are also ten other rules, for example, 'I will not sell poison or weapons'. The result of these rules was that you could not find a knife in any shop, nor a mace, nor any poison during Ashoka's reign. However, many attacks were being made on India as it had become a big country. Ashoka had united India all the way to the southern borders and in the north, India went all the way to Iran and Afghanistan. Shortly thereafter, people from those countries began to invade and attack. They came with massive weapons and horses, but India's spending on defence had been reduced. Instead, mendicant communities and Buddhist viharas were being built. A *vihara* is a place where sadhus and monks live. The state of Bihar acquired its name on account of having so many viharas. The result of Ashoka's new policy was that India could not face the attacks. Therefore, Buddhism was uprooted from this area. Now you will not see any Buddhist monks here.

My point is that although a person might become famous in his lifetime and receive great public acclaim, it needs to be ascertained whether his philosophy can come to the aid at a time when the country is in trouble. Buddhism disappointed India; it did not prove useful. This is why Buddha was uprooted and Rama appeared on the scene. The Buddhist philosophical idea of *bodhisattvas*, beings who attain nirvana and remain in human form to teach others, was wiped out from among the people. Mahavira was also uprooted. His temples and devotees remained; however, their social and political guidelines were not followed. After that, God came here in the form of Rama, Krishna, Hanuman, or Shiva, who had to just throw his trident and the whole world would be destroyed, and then Vishnu, who always created weapons, sometimes a discus and sometimes a brahmastra.

How long Mahatma Gandhi's principles will last and on what occasions they will prove useful is very hard to say. Yes, his personal lifestyle was very good. He used to eat the chutney of bitter neem leaves, cleaned his own toilet, washed his own clothes. This was living an ideal. However, this was

his personal life, which is a different matter. For a nation, for society, what was his teaching?

But Swamiji, didn't he achieve independence through non-violence?

Any great person can become famous in his lifetime because he is respected by the king, government, people and thinkers. However, the true test of a person's greatness is history. Rama was a good person. He did not like to fight wars, but he had the knowledge of warfare. He did not raise his hand against women, yet ultimately the whole of Lanka was destroyed by him. There was no one left to even light Ravana's funeral pyre. His wife, Mandodari, had to perform the funeral rites.

A hero is one who takes care of the state of the country. Rama and Krishna did just that, which is why they are still around; otherwise, even they would not make it. Why is Hanuman still here? Hanuman is the symbol of bravery. He is also a great example of bhakti and seva, though he is best known for his bravery. He was not only brave, but intelligent and strong. Sometimes the brave are not tough, but he was very tough, very strong. Does the government today tell us that we should perform pooja to Hanuman in our homes? Does the government organize programs to celebrate Hanuman Jayanti? No, but we do this because we like Hanuman.

Mahatma Gandhi's life was of the highest kind, but the ordinary person cannot live like that. The other issue relates to economics. The population of the world has reached six billion. In terms of feeding these six billion, to what extent will Gandhiji's philosophy or Swami Satyananda's philosophy be effective? In the last five years Swami Satyananda has been using only one towel, which means that in the last five years the shopkeeper has sold only one towel. That poor chap has had no income because of me. If I used one towel a month and threw it away, he would sell twelve towels a year. He would have some sales and he could get a commission on it and profit would also be earned by the actual makers of the towels. If people lead a simple, ordinary life, the markets become weak.

If you have ten thousand rupees and you spend one thousand, the market will get one thousand, but if you spend ten thousand then ten thousand is distributed in the market. This is the principle of western economics. Why are the people of the West so rich today? It is because they do not save money; they spend it. If you spend money to buy goods from my shop it creates a cycle of spending. When you spend a lot, I spend a lot; everyone spends a lot and then everyone has a good income. This is the secret of the success of the West.

Products are made in such a way in foreign countries that they last only for three or four years. Whether it is a watch or a radio, people have to buy things again and again.

I have a clock that tells me the time by talking, a talking clock. I have had it for thirty years. This means that because of me, only one clock has been sold. If it stopped working in two years I would have to buy another one; someone would have made a sale. You buy one newspaper and ten people read it. If ten people bought a newspaper each then ten newspapers would be sold. Unless there are sales, there will be no creation of wealth. This is the foundation of the market and society's success and affluence is dependent on the market.

There is poverty in India because people here do not spend money. Each person has gold in their house, but it is like mud; they cannot earn anything from that gold. If you have one hundred grams of gold its value is forty thousand rupees. If that amount is spent, someone will have an income. Someone will be able to buy oil, vegetables, clothes and other items. All those who earn through this will also spend more money. This is the only reason why westerners have money; there is no other reason.

Westerners do not keep gold and silver in their homes. They do not even own their houses; they live in rented houses. They move house frequently. No one has a permanent job. They work for a year or two and then move on. In the place of gold and silver, they just have a wedding ring; that is all. In India, forty thousand rupees are locked up in one house,

two hundred thousand are locked up in another, and so on. You can calculate the total amount of money lying locked up and not making its way into the market. This is why India is poor. Until money moves, there will be no prosperity. Coins are round so that they keep circulating!

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy was relevant to his time. However, will his philosophy be followed in all ages? Today Gandhiji is our respected leader, the father of the nation. A great person is not one who says nice things, but one whose words are valuable, one who speaks things that can be put to good use. Gandhiji used to eat bitter neem chutney. How many will eat bitter neem? He wore one four and a half foot dhoti. I have been using one towel for the past five years; it will last for another ten. If I bought a towel each month, the poor shopkeeper would have some sales. Non-violence, simplicity, these are good qualities, but not for the common populace. They want money.

Rama has been sought out by the people; they have chosen him. There have been other historical figures also. The people chose only Rama, as he made a good hero according to the needs of the people, society and nation. Valmiki asked Narada to tell him of a man of good character, full of good qualities, wise and strong. Narada said, "There is only one such person, and that is Rama. That is it. He is solid and amazing." Society chooses such a hero as appeals to them. People were fond of Rama. Tulsidas liked him, Valmiki liked him. Rama's example was used from time to time, and different stories were added on.

These days Buddhism is widespread only in a few countries, such as Japan. Yet, it's not the same as what Rama means to us. They worship Lord Buddha, chant prayers, recount a tale or two, that is all. They do not know much about Lord Buddha. The followers of Buddhism or Christianity limit their religion to the temple or church. Today, how many Christians actually follow Christ's teachings? It is written in the Bible that if someone slaps you across your cheek, do not hit them back, but instead turn the other cheek. If someone

takes your coat, give him your shirt as well; do not fight. That is what it is written, but the West does not follow this. If someone slaps them once, they slap back ten times over.

On the Chinese New Year, people gift each other oranges or little saplings of orange trees. What is the significance of this?

There used to be a tradition, which is not practised any more due to poverty, that during any festival, such as Holi or Diwali, people would give each other gifts. This was a custom in villages. For instance, if I had an orchard of oranges I would prepare a hundred saplings. If a son was born to me, I would distribute these orange saplings, or coconut or bamboo or something like that, as gifts to the villagers. We have a tradition where the wealthy people in a village would be required to gift either good seeds or saplings to people during Diwali or Dussehra. Useful items are given, such as lime, orange, mango, guava or banana plants, which can be eaten or sold. Even the orange peel is eaten; we do not throw away the orange peel. Whenever we got oranges, the peel was removed and made into jam or preserves. We used to store it in jars and eat it with roti.

Just as we give importance to the tulsi plant, the Chinese people have a pomegranate tree in each house. They consider it to be holy and use its leaves for medicinal purposes. Why do you think they do that?

Peepal, pomegranate, all trees are sacred. However, according to Ayurveda, tulsi has the maximum medicinal properties. Ayurveda considers tulsi to be the queen of all medicines. After tulsi comes peepal. Peepal also has many medicinal qualities. Next comes bael. This does not mean that jamun or any other tree does not have good properties; all plants have some medicinal property. Nevertheless, the maximum number of properties is in tulsi.

Tulsi has antibiotic properties. How do hospitals treat a wound that does not heal or a fever that does not go down?

They give antibiotics for five days. The substance that can kill infection-producing germs is called antibiotic and this antibiotic is found in tulsi. Near Haridwar, thousands of acres of tulsi are planted and the leaves are collected. There is a government company there called Hindustan Antibiotics. Tulsi leaves are taken and antibiotics are made from them. They grow a type of fungus on the tulsi. Antibiotics are extracted from that.

Earlier in our villages, illiterate people did not know all this and that is why they were told to worship tulsi and not cut it down. Ayurveda mentions that tulsi can be used to treat fertility problems, cough and fever, and nowadays they say it is also used in treating AIDS. Ashvagandha, peepal and tulsi have been combined and used in the treatment of AIDS. In the coming years, the biggest disease is going to be AIDS. In earlier times, sexual relations had many social and psychological controls. Now there is no control. In modern times, one has no idea who is doing what. In the coming years, sexual relations between men and women will become more unruly, because society is not like it used to be. What was considered impossible forty years ago will be commonplace in the years to come. The disease resulting from improper relations between men and women is AIDS. The cure for this disease has not yet been found. Until now scientists have not been able to identify the virus, the HIV genes; they have not been able to separate it. Independence in thinking and behaviour in society has meant that this disease has spread rapidly. In the next century, the spread of this disease is certain and its treatment will be ashvagandha, peepal, tulsi, and other medicinal plants. Pomegranate also has good properties, as does coconut and grass; however, they do not compare with tulsi.

India is an ancient land. Civilization first took birth here, as this place was suited to civilization. The prospects of staying alive here were higher. No one can say that civilization first came about in Sweden. It could not, as the climate was not conducive. Here, we have about three months of summer, three months of winter, three months of monsoon and also

three months of spring. No season lasts for too long. Even in the summer, if the temperature rises too high, clouds appear, there is thunder and rain and the climate changes. Plentiful water, many forests and many mountains; these are everywhere in India. From snow to sea, there is nothing that India does not have. Only in a place where a man can comfortably wear a short loincloth and make a simple shelter to live in can civilization develop. Where people need hot water, where alcohol is needed to keep the body warm, where meat, eggs and chicken are needed to make the body strong, the civilization does not last long, as what happens if one does not get what is needed? Here we can manage very well with whatever there is. This country has done a lot of research and has made progress in many fields.

People have thought a lot about things like this and have come to certain conclusions. There has been a lot of discussion about medicine, social customs and relations, marriage and progeny, relations between men and women, lineage, birth and death, sadhus and mahatmas, celibacy and more. Should celibacy be practised or not? Should one marry or not? In this manner, many issues have been discussed. In India, the rishis and munis have debated these things for thousands of years. They have talked to people from other cultures and studied their customs and behaviour. Only then have we come to a decision.

We cannot remove tulsi from here and plant pomegranate instead. We have pomegranate here and peepal as well; however, tulsi has been called the queen of the plant kingdom, and she is indeed the queen! I came here eight years ago and I live in my own way. I stay outdoors if I want to or indoors if I feel like it. For eight years I have not had even a nominal cold or cough and not for a single day has my anushtana been disrupted. Forget about a whole day, not even a single session have I missed. This is only because of Tulsi, as she is the ishta devi of our ashram.

I have told Tulsi that now I do not want anything. What is there to want? I do not want to make an ashram or a house, I



do not want to get married or earn money; I only want to sing bhajan. As long as I live, I will follow the rules I've adopted. The way I am living now is very different from my earlier days. I used to spend all twenty-four hours in air-conditioning. I did not wear this kind of clothing. I was used to all the creature comforts. Now for the last eight years, I have not had a single illness. How can I not have regard for Tulsi? Eight years is not a short period of time.

Ayurveda is a very ancient body of knowledge that we have. Dhanvantari was its first propounder; then came other physicians like Sushena, Charaka, Sushruta. Rishi Sushruta used to perform surgeries. He wrote many books in which the properties of all the plants are mentioned. The properties of the various medicinal herbs, where they grow, what medicines are made from them, all this is written.

Satsang 18

27 September 1997



Independence and creativity

Even if parents wish only the best for their children, there are nevertheless some aspects of the relationship between parents and children that have a negative influence on the child's personality. For example, those children who always stay with their parents feel secure and protected, and that is not necessarily an advantage. Countries where the children always stay with the parents are not able to progress much and social change does not take place there. In the areas of politics, education and science, one has to be enterprising. The society that existed in India a thousand years ago still exists today.

Despite education and modern clothes the social philosophy is exactly as it was a thousand years ago. History indicates that when a society remains static then it is like stagnant water in a pond. As long as the water flows in the stream it stays clean and pure, but when it becomes confined to the pond it rots, and viruses and bacteria start growing in it.

If children stay in a hostel they become independent in many ways. They do not have their mother to look after them and tell them things twenty-four hours a day. They are not sheltered by anyone. Those children who are always sheltered by their parents can never make much progress. They cannot evolve and become full of creativity. The duty of the parents is to look after their children's expenses. They should not control the thought process of their children. Look at other countries; they have progressed so much. Science, education social systems, they have progressed in all these fields. Boys and girls are being kept together and given the same rights and the same opportunities. They do not say, "A woman must wear this and not wear that." They have developed arms and weapons as well. They go to other planets and operate robots there through computers.

The first step in the development of human civilization was when fire was discovered in ancient times. The second development came with electricity. These are the two main steps in the development of human civilization. If there was no fire, can you imagine how things would be today? If electricity had not been invented there would be nothing at all. You would have to come here from Bhagalpur in a bullock-cart.

That is why one should worship independence, for it gives birth to creativity. However, some regulations should be followed by the independent man, woman and child; otherwise, halfway along the road the car will have trouble. The steering wheel of the car must be well-maintained. In other words, there should be good habits and good customs.

Parents should educate their children well and give them the maximum knowledge. Marriage should be according to the children's will; it is not the responsibility of the parents.

Marriage is the need of the individual, not of the parents. Nowadays, in societies where boys and girls are well-educated and know a lot about social norms, they should be allowed to choose their own marriage partners according to their preference. This is my point of view. If the children can make a mistake in choosing their partner, this mistake can also be made by the parents. If parents make a mistake, they cover it up, they don't let it come out in the open, they keep quiet about it. However, if children make a mistake, it is splashed all over the newspapers. As far as the choice of life partner goes, it has always been a gamble.

Vedic culture

In the Vedas, a lot of thought has been given to marriage, last rites, havans, sacrifice, and so on. There is a mention of human sacrifice, animal sacrifice, heaven and hell, the god of death Yamaraja, and the god of water Varuna; many subjects have been discussed. In fact, there are only three Vedas, not four. When the *Rigveda* is sung, it becomes the *Samaveda*. The actual subjects are only three: *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda*.

From the *Rigveda* we get the Aranya granthas, works containing instructions for the *vanaprasthis*, people over the age of fifty. Then there are the Brahmana granthas, works that give instructions about how to perform ceremonies relating to marriage, naming of a child, last rites, and other rituals. The Brahmana granthas consist of practices and customs to be followed by householders; they are not about the 'brahmin' caste. After this come the Samhitas, which contain mantras. The collection of mantras recited by pandits during *poojas* or rituals, such as the mantra *Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*, is called a Samhita.

The last section is the Upanishads, meant for sannyasins and renunciates. The Upanishads are also called Vedanta. In this context, *anta* does not mean 'end'. Here, it refers to the basic teachings or inner gist, the essence. The inner essence of milk is ghee. Just as milk culminates in ghee, the

essence or the sap of the Vedas is Vedanta. The culmination of the Vedas is not the Samhitas, Brahmanas, or Aranyas; it is the Upanishads. The Upanishads teach that the *jivatma*, individual soul, and *Paramatma*, Supreme Soul, are not separate; they are one. The difference between God and you is similar to the difference between gold and the mine from where it has come. Along with the gold, other impurities also come out, which are removed. That impurity is called *maya*, illusion. Take away *maya* and you will become Brahman. Some call it *maya*; some say *samsara*, the manifest creation. There are various names. The real gold is within. This is the principle of the Upanishads. *Ishavasyam idam sarvam* – “This whole world is pervaded by God.” This is the first mantra of the last chapter in the *Yajurveda*.

Social systems

Society has specific needs according to the times. In each age, society considers some things as essential and some as unnecessary. In earlier days, education was not considered essential; now it is absolutely needed. In my generation, money was not that important; instead, commodities were valued. Nowadays, it is money that is important, not goods. If I offer someone six hundred rupees or a bicycle, he will prefer to have the money. Each society comes with its contemporary political situations, relationships between the ruler and the ruled, its own specialities and essential needs. Some things become less important and some become totally redundant. A small example is marriage. In modern times, this has become a big event. From the point of view of money, spectacle, in every regard marriage has become a big thing.

If I say the wedding should be short and simple, you will say, “But in the Vedas it is written this way.” No, it is not written like that in the Vedas. The performance of all rituals, from marriage to last rites, has been described in our Vedas in two ways: the vedic ceremony and the *laukika*, worldly, ceremony. ‘Vedic’ refers to what is mentioned in the Vedas and ‘laukika’ refers to your cultural practices. For

instance, Adivasi, Assamese, Kashmiri, Punjabi and Bihari societies have different marriage rituals and ceremonies; these are called *laukika*. The other kind is *vedic*. In the *vedic* ceremony there are only the following four aspects and nothing else: *Kanyadaan*, giving away of the bride; *panigrahana*, the bridegroom taking the bride's hand; *agni sakshi*, fire ceremony; and *saat phere*, the seven perambulations of the fire.

Playing music, giving dowry, all these have been added on by people according to their orientations. Someone gives a coconut; someone else gives a betel nut. Where there is an abundance of coconuts they will give coconuts. In Kumaon, there are no coconuts, so how can we give them? In Mithila, there is a custom of giving *makhana*s. 'Makhana' is derived from the root words 'makh' and 'annam'. *Makh* means *yajna* and *annam* means food. The food offered to the *yajna* is called *makhana*. Since this particular type of food is found in *taala* or lakes, it is called *taalamakhana*.

The pure *vedic* marriage ceremony lasts for about half an hour to three quarters of an hour and the cost of the ritual is only about three hundred rupees. The Arya Samaj marriages are conducted like this. This is the need for today's times. In a changing society a lot of things become simple: less expense, less time, less complications and troubles.

Regarding last rites, earlier one had to call the *dom*, the cremation ground worker, who used to prepare the fire. These days you just go to the crematorium and pay about two or three hundred rupees. There, you bathe the body with sandalwood water, light incense, offer flowers and put the body in. If you want to immerse the ashes at Prayagraj, return the next day and you get the ashes in a bottle.

The point here is that one should change according to society and not say, "It is not written like this in our scriptures." There are many religions in the world that are very rigid and orthodox. The Hindu religion is not so rigid; it has a lot of flexibility. *Vedic* philosophy says that religion is for the good and benefit of the people. That is why one should be able to

adapt and change according to the requirement. You wear clothes because you have a need. You will not wear woollens in summer and light clothing in winter; you will wear what is needed and change according to the need. In the same way, customs and practices are needs and should be changed according to the times. Make them simple.

Today's world is moving very fast. Once I went to New York from London by supersonic jet. We left London after breakfast and reached New York at breakfast time as well; I got breakfast twice! I have seen two-year olds who can assess TV programs. The child is watching TV and says to the mother, "Mummy, switch this program off and play another one." See how fast the child's progress is! Their hormonal systems must be working so much faster than the previous generations. These are called 'fast times.' In the social systems of such a world, a person must also move fast.

They say that the Aryans came from outside; they are not from India. Is that true?

There is no historical evidence to prove that Aryans came from elsewhere. Nowhere, in no stone or rock, has anything been found. Modern scholars have just believed it based on their assumptions. This is just an idea, a figment of imagination. There is clear and definite evidence about the Aryan connection with India. Moreover, in the Vedas there is no mention of any geographical places outside of India. In the vedic mantras, only the names of local rivers are mentioned, not rivers from Europe or Central Asia. If you say that vedic literature was written after the Aryans had immigrated here, then this immigration must also be written about. The books should also refer to this fact.

The Parsi people, on the other hand, did emigrate from Iran. Even if they consider themselves to be Indian today, they recite the names of rivers and mountains from Iran during their prayers and rituals. Muslims can call themselves Indian; however, when they read the Koran, they turn towards the west because that is where Mecca and Medina are located.

According to the records of anthropology, the shape and composition of Indian skulls are like that of Central Asiatic people.

I am willing to concede that in some specific areas, human physical form is of a certain kind. The physical features of people from Punjab and Afghanistan are similar. I am willing to accept this, as it is said the Mahabharata war involved people from Gandhar, Uzbekistan and even Turkey. I will say that they are the same type as us. Their eyes are dark brown and so are ours; all physical characteristics are similar. However, religions are undoubtedly different.

Two things must be kept in mind. First, the trace of historical realities must exist in folk music, folklore, customs and practices. 'Indra should be believed in because he is the one who gives rain; otherwise, our fields lie fallow.' This is an Aryan belief. There are three main deities mentioned in the Vedas: Indra, Varuna and Matrishvan. *Varuna* means water and *Matrishvan* means wind. Various other gods and goddesses are also mentioned in the Vedas. There is also a prayer, "May our bulls stay strong, may the trees bear much fruit, may the earth give much grain, may the rains come at the right time." All the yajnas were held with this in mind. The races that are not vedic do not have these same folk customs and practices.

The people of Europe are non-vedic races. Their folk customs and their language point to the fact that they belong to non-vedic races. Their language has one word from Danish, one from Latin, another from Greek. In Sanskrit, each letter, each word has only one pronunciation; there is a joining of vowels and accents. In Sanskrit there is no discrepancy, whereas non-vedic languages have the special feature of no definite rule or sequence. Everything is put together in a random fashion. Their folk music is a mixture from many places. The customs of their dance, clothes, the relationship between men and women, and their social systems have many variations in them. When a tradition, a race has been around for thousands of years, particular norms are followed, a certain stability is maintained and it does not change.

Approximately eight hundred years ago Muslims attacked India and consequently, the dancers, singers, musicians, painters, basically the entire artist community, ran away from here. Hundreds and thousands left the country and moved westward. In the West they were called gypsies and until today, they have not been able to settle down anywhere; not in France, not in Romania. All their traditional rituals and practices are simple and short.

What all this indicates is that debating about where the Aryans came from and how they came is totally useless, as the Aryans have left nothing in writing to say that they were from another country. The rivers and mountains named by them are all from here. The oldest book in the world is the *Rigveda*. Before the *Rigveda* was written, what was the progress of language and grammar? Are you trying to say that wild, uncivilized people started writing the *Rigveda*? During that time there was grammar and metre. The language in the Vedas is not free verse; all the Vedas are based upon a distinct metre: Gayatri, Trishtup, Jagati, and so on. The composition of poems and words is amazing.

There is a chapter in the *Rigveda* on soma rasa, ‘Soma Sukta’. *Soma rasa* is a type of liquid which, when consumed, takes a person into other dimensions of consciousness. This praise of soma is worth reading. Not just from the perspective of language or grammar, but also as the expression of human emotion. The expression of human emotions was done so beautifully in those days.

Such grammar, language, metre, would have come about through centuries of development. Only after the language had matured to this extent that the Vedas were composed, and there is no indication in them about the Aryans having come from elsewhere. Not a single mountain range is mentioned that is not found in India. Himalaya, Sahyadri and Vindhya are the mountains mentioned. Likewise, the rivers, seas and races named are all from India. Not even once have those people talked about the bitter cold of the regions in northern and central Asia.

Eastern Europe and central Asia are not agricultural countries. Undoubtedly they grow vegetables there; however, we cannot call them agricultural countries. Agricultural countries are those that have six seasons: two months of low summer, two months of high summer, two months of spring, two months of autumn, two months of winter and two months of rains. If there is only summer and monsoon, what farming can be done? In Northern Europe it snows for six months, people wear thick clothing and cannot survive without eating meat. Such countries cannot even imagine a vegetarian diet. East or West Russia, Germany and certain areas of Europe cannot survive on a vegetarian diet. Apart from India, there are not many countries that can maintain a vegetarian diet. Yes, they do eat vegetables; however, eating only dal, roti and vegetables is not accepted. In the Vedas it is clearly mentioned that the rishis and munis lived on fruits, roots and tubers. It does not say that they ate meat. If they did so, it would have been mentioned.

Another area of difference is the notion of *brahmacharya*, celibacy. In the Indian tradition, Hanuman is considered a complete brahmachari. The idea of brahmacharya is not seen anywhere in the world except in India. In Christianity, the concept of celibacy is limited to sexuality. Being sexually inactive and being a brahmachari are two different things. The idea of brahmacharya comes from the Vedas and Upanishads.

The people who wrote the Vedas and Upanishads undoubtedly encountered the various races that came to India from time to time, such as the Shakas, Huns, Africans, Mongols and Kambojas. There is mention of this in the *Ramayana* also. There is reason to believe that once upon a time India was a very large country, which spread westward to Kabul and the Hindukush range and to South-East Asia as well. Just as today we refer to America as the 'golden bird,' in those days they said the same about India. There is a rise and fall in the history of every country. Gradually, India began declining. Some desert areas were lost, then Afghanistan went.

It is not a historical fact that the Aryans came from outside India. I am going to say one more thing, which comes from my experience. I had a cave in Gangotri with all sorts of facilities; however, I did not choose to stay there, as I would have been able to reside there only for four months a year, due to the extreme cold. The rest of the time I would have to move down, towards Uttarkashi. I said, “Forget it. I do not like coming and going. If I stay here, I can have a long and steady sadhana.” That is why I chose this place. It is not too hot and not too cold. When a place is hospitable and the seasons are not extreme, the society there is stable. Families have been living in their villages generation after generation. This is exactly what happened here in India.

I am very willing to accept that people from many other countries came to India. African people came, people from Somalia, and settled in Kerala. South-East Asians came and settled in Bengal and Orissa. People from many races came and settled here, and the core Aryan race is almost wiped out now; they all mingled with the other races. The root language of the Aryans was Sanskrit, and they were basically agricultural people. The opinion that scholars have about agriculturists is that only those people who stay in the same place become farmers. Trade can be carried out anywhere; however, for farming you need to stay in one place. This is only possible for a secure society. The Aryans farmed the land, kept animals and did a little trading. Farming, animal husbandry and trading; these are the three words have been mentioned in the texts. The first word in the Vedas is fire:

*Agnim ile purohitam yajnasya devam
ritvijam hotaram ratnadhatamam.*

We worship the adorable Fire, the chief priest of the yajna. He has the yajna done in due season. He, as the summoner, is capable of bringing the gods to the yajna performed here.

Aryans worshipped fire. When they discovered fire, they asked some people in the village to keep it safe, to tend it; this was their only job. The people who needed it would ask for fire from them. They later went on to become the agnihotra brahmins.

In the Vedas, the first place belongs to Ganesha. Whether one is a Vaishnava or a Shaiva or a Shakta, at the very beginning of any auspicious activity, Ganesha is worshipped. The *Vedic Shanti Mantras* say: *Om ganaanaam tvaa ganapati gvam havaamahe* – “We worship the lord of the ganas.” Any pooja or worship commences with the mantras of Ganesha. The Aryans believed in many gods and goddesses; nevertheless, they knew the supreme godhead was only one. They knew each individual would have his own beliefs. The people of the South believe in Shiva, the people of Bengal venerate Devi, the Punjabis follow the Gurus, people from Uttar Pradesh believe in Rama and Krishna. Society cannot function if there is only one god. It is good to believe in many gods.

Is the use of meat and wine is advocated in the tantras?

Tantra does not say you should eat meat or drink wine; rather, it says that even if you eat meat and drink wine, you can still practise yoga, as these are not prohibited in the practice of dhyana and kundalini yoga. After all, there are billions of people in the world; why should only a few people be able to practise yoga? Tantra does not say that eating meat or drinking wine is a compulsory activity. This is not necessary. The meaning of this is that even if you are non-vegetarian you can do the practices.

Another thing is that people from many countries came to live in India and brought their practices, customs and modes of worship with them. There are certain customs that are practised regularly among each race. When these races brought their practices with them, the people of India said, “Okay, do it.” These practices were accepted as part of the social customs of that race. If you have ever gone to Kamakhya, you would have seen the priests at the temple

swinging pigeons from their hands. Those pigeons are sacrificed and their blood is given as prasad. This is accepted in that culture.

All the big and small temples around Rikhia sacrifice goats, not to eat, but as worship. A son is born, sacrifice a goat. A shop has been opened, sacrifice a goat. A house has been built, sacrifice a goat. There has been a wedding, sacrifice a goat. If your wish has been fulfilled, sacrifice a goat. I say, "All right, if this is your custom then why should we criticize it? We do not believe in it, but if you do, we do not want to break your beliefs and faith."

In this manner, Shaivites and Shaktas came to this country. Jesus Christ also came and so did Mother Mary. Saint Francis came and so did Islam. Many people came here! Our belief is to let them come; what difference does it make? Earlier we lit lamps with mustard oil. Now people light candles. No harm done. Does the candle have anything to do with the Christian religion or mustard oil anything to do with the Hindu faith? The people here were farmers. The main harvest here was mustard and consequently they lit lamps with that oil. In the same way, Christians light candles. In this country, we have accepted all kinds of rites and rituals, all kinds of religions and faiths, all saints and great men, as we know there is no harm in doing so, only benefit.

Three things go on continuously in nature or creation: birth, death and, in between these two, life. There is a balance between them. For us, they take the form of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh: creation, sustenance and destruction. These are the three root principles. If you look upon death or destruction as a fault and you think that some life is being destroyed, then first of all stop eating vegetables, as there is as much life in vegetables as there is in a goat. When you put a knife to a goat's body it experiences the same reaction as a cabbage. The reaction in a human, a goat and a leaf of spinach is the same. Kirlian photography has proved this. Life is all-pervasive and is found in every form. All creatures have life, and where there is life, there is also change. Change

implies progress as well as destruction. Mud turns into stone and stone into mud. In reality, death is the act of maintaining balance in nature or creation. The value that a goat or a fish has in nature is the same as that of a cabbage. You either understand the true value of all these three or keep quiet.

As far as killing goes, nowadays everywhere they say, “Don’t kill the tiger, don’t kill the monkey, don’t kill an insect, don’t even kill a diseased dog.” This is taking the philosophy to an extreme. If you imagine how things were five hundred years ago, when the population of India was a third of what it is now, there were forests everywhere. Imagine that the fields are full of ripe grain, and suddenly five thousand sparrows arrive out of nowhere; that is the end of the harvest. A herd of deer comes out of the forest and jumps into the fields. I have seen this with my own eyes. When the fields were full of ripe basmati rice grains, its fragrance used to attract the deer from the forests. Bullets would be fired, the deer would die, but still they would keep coming and eating. They used to go mad at that time. Any wheat field has a wonderful fragrance; however, the deer used to go mad with the scent of the basmati rice.

In those days people were not followers of non-violence. That is why they used to go hunting. The landowners used to take their guns and go off into the jungles in the evening and bang, bang, bang, they would shoot at everything, as the animals and birds used to be harmful to the agriculture. Even now, there is a lot of difficulty in the villages due to animals. There is a lot of loss. In my village, the families who used to guard the fields would get a gold coin each year along with their regular income. Their job was to kill the birds and animals; that is all. We did not have guns with bullets, but with buckshot. It would spray around and have a wider range; one shot and forty to fifty birds would drop right there.

The population there is less. Here, the problem is that the population is too large.

You are right. All the same, despite their population being less, the percentage of poor people is even higher than here.

The only difference is that their governments cause wars in other countries, sell them arms and armaments and then pay its poor people a stipend. Those pitiful souls eat bread and butter and go to sleep. If the government stops paying this today, everyone will be on the streets.

When I used to travel abroad, the people there used to tell me, "There is a lot of poverty where you come from." I used to say, "There is a lot of poverty here as well. In our country the poor are visible; in your country they are invisible. Stop paying these benefits; everyone will end up on the street and then you will see those people." They used to say, "Your country is dirty." I used to reply, "We have domestic garbage; you have industrial waste. You clean up your industrial waste and we will clean up our domestic garbage." The industrialized countries of the western world are putting unjustified pressure upon developing nations in the name of ideals. There is no harm in killing animals. If a snake appears, you kill it, won't you? Or a mosquito?

There are different levels in a democracy. Make a study of the democracy in our country; here there is one hundred percent democracy. In India, a bad person has as many rights as a good person. This kind of democracy is effective only when the hands of the law are long, when the police have a lot of power. Even here, it cannot be totally successful. America has such an alert police force, they have so many facilities and there is still crime: daylight robberies take place. Earlier people died fighting wars, now they will die due to all this. People die in a monarchy, people die under dictatorships and now people die in democracies as well. Society has not been able to come up with a principle for the ideal state.

Look at any developed nation. There are so many murders and rapes in America despite their having such an alert police force. Sweden has the highest standard of living in the world; however, the statistics on suicide there is unbelievable. Those countries have everything: food, assured permanent jobs, twenty-four hour electricity, heaters, houses. There is no need for marriage; you can

just live with someone. In that case, why are there so many suicides? This is not the flaw of the society, but the political system. It is a political flaw or weakness. When a political system is unsuccessful, it affects the society.

In a country where the government gives you food, clothes, a house, pays many other benefits, tells you that it is not necessary to marry, you can just live with whom you like, all struggle is finished. Where there is no struggle, depression sets in. Study for a BA, study for an MA, get a job, open a shop, make a home, get things ready for your daughter's marriage; all this struggle keeps the mind alert and occupied. In the West, people have nothing to struggle for in life and this is the very thing that will bring these countries down. In the absence of struggle, the western world will be finished off and India will progress because of its struggles.

Your father has a lot of money, your husband has money, your son has money, and this is not enough. Struggle means that there should be some things you are not able to get in life. It is not enough that you have married, had children and you have a family. If you try to do something outside of this, that is struggle. You have to think, 'I must also do something else.' Keep your mind ever active or else it will rust. This is the reason for suicides in Sweden. I said to those people, "Your political systems are wrong. You should stop paying all these benefits. You have free relations between men and women; there should be some control put on that. Your religious heads must legitimately insist that people get married, because marriage in itself is a very big struggle." If someone gets married, as is the right procedure, and stays together, it is a big headache, is it not? However, if a boy and girl simply stay together there is no problem; leave when you like. In reality, the struggle of married life is a good one.

Satsang 19

28 September 1997



Man can never repay woman. The favour we owe to women, to mothers, can never be truly matched. From the womb of women, outstanding personalities like Shankaracharya, Vivekananda, Einstein, Rama and Krishna have been born. Even God receives incarnation from her. In the same manner in which you were born, Rama and Krishna were also born. This is why my thoughts about women are always the highest. I do not make a secret of it. I have a special regard for the girls and women who come to the ashram here.

Swamiji, why do women wear toe rings?

The reason is so that when they work in the fields, they don't get fungus between the toes. When the toes are close together, fungus forms. When toe rings are worn they keep the toes separated. In India, everything has two reasons behind it: one is religious and one is practical. When a custom only has a religious connotation then it becomes confined only to a particular community; however, if it has practical applications then it becomes widespread. Why is the toe ring made of silver or gold? There is a straightforward reason behind this also. At one time there was so much gold in India that the country was called the 'golden bird'. This gold disappeared, as the kings, rulers and administrators used it up in their own way: consumed it, sold it, did this, did that. The government stock of gold is finished; however, the gold that its people have is not. This is what is called household gold. The government gold did not come to any use for us, yet what our mothers saved up has come to good use.

Even the poorest household will have forty to fifty thousand rupees worth of gold. This is the wealth of the girls, the women's wealth, the wealth of the family, and no man can lay a hand on it. In India, every family must have gold worth at least a lakh of rupees so that if the government falls or is made bankrupt, or if there is an invasion, no problem; we have gold with us. Let the rule come and go; we are not bothered by it.

Not all governments are selfless. There are also those governments that have sold the country down the drain, so how can we trust them? In India, the illiterate villagers do not even have the knowledge to develop trust in the government mechanism. They do not read the newspapers, do not watch TV, nor are they in politics. They gather firewood from dawn to dusk and use it to cook their food. I have travelled around everywhere and speak from experience. That is why, when you come here for Sita Kalyanam, do not bring flowers and sweets. You can give them to Swami Satyananda or Rama, but not to Sita. Whatever you give her, give according to her station, her dignity.

Music and dance

In India, there are only two basic forms of music: Hindustani and Carnatic. Later, the scholars created more divisions based on the voice. The sounds that emerge from the throat are not always alike. The note *sa* sung by the Dravidians of South India will not be the same as *sa* sung in the North. The note is the same, but the way it is sung is different. Bengalis have a particular tone, Punjabis have a different one, and so on. The note *sa* is the same, the number of notes is also the same, the systems of ragas are the same, the notes that are not allowed, the ascending and descending scales, and other such rules, are all the same. However, the basic difference between Hindustani and Carnatic music is the voice.

The other difference in these two styles of music is the presentation. In Hindustani music, it takes at least half an hour to complete a raga, whereas the people in the South can complete it in five minutes. The entire presentation of music: *alaap*, *gamak*, *tarana*, and so forth, has been shortened in the South. Here in the North, *alaap*, the prelude, is sung at length; there they have shortened it. Any presentation in Carnatic music does not take more than ten minutes.

I have studied Carnatic music. My study of Sanskrit has also been in the southern tradition. While I had studied Sanskrit as a child, when I came to Rishikesh I felt, 'Oh no! My enunciation is wrong.' At that point, I started reciting the Vedas according to the southern style. I started studying music in the southern style. I also knew dance and even that I changed to the southern style.

I was very young then and I used to dance very well. Up until 1962, I used to give dance performances on stage: a blend of both Bharat Natyam and Kuchipudi. Even now, if I get hold of any videotape of classical dance, I watch it. I can give a critical appreciation of it as well. Last year there were many dance performances here: Kuchipudi, Bharat Natyam, and Odissi also. I can give my opinion about all of them.

In Almora we had a great advantage, as the famous dancer Uday Shankar opened his cultural centre there.

People used to come there from both India and abroad to learn music and dance. Famous musicians of that time used to come and teach there. In Almora, a lot of boys of my age used to be very involved in learning dance there. There would be very good Ramalilas in Kumaon. For nine days at a time, the villages used to be deserted and in the towns there was no place to put a foot anywhere. I am talking about the period before 1940, something that took place fifty years ago. The villages in Kumaon are not like the ones here. It would take five to six hours to walk just five miles, as it is not level land; there are steep ups and downs, and yet the villages would be empty. We used to perform in those Ramalilas. Someone would be paid a rupee; someone else would get two. In those days the boys were crazy about dance and drama.

Dance is a very great science. Just as we join the letters to make words, sentences, ideas, subjects and literature, in the same way dance also has a language. That language is made up of postures of the body, whether it is eye movements, hand movements, facial expressions or anything else. Just as the letter 'ka' is different from 'bha,' there is a difference in the eye and body movements. This is the core language of dance that is taught by Bharata in the *Natya Shastra*.

The *Natya Shastra* of Bharata is a volume in Sanskrit, written in sloka form. Just as there is a grammar guide for Sanskrit by Panini, the *Natya Shastra* of Bharata is the equivalent for dance. Each movement of the body is indicative of something. Feeling, pace, expression, posture; these form the different elements and tones of dance.

There is another form of dance: *katha kalakshepam*, dance based on a story. It is dance but not pure dance; it is the experimental form of dance. For example, *Kumarasambhavam* by Kalidas is the story of Kartikeya's birth. The story includes Shiva carrying Sati's corpse and wandering in desolation, followed by Narada's promise, Parvati's penance and then Shiva and Parvati's marriage. The description of Parvati's penance in *Kumarasambhavam* is amazing. The armlets

around Parvati's upper arms slip down to her elbows, then to her wrists and finally fall to the ground. This is depicted through dance.

Just as there is verse and prose in language, in the same manner there are ways to depict a story in dance. This is called katha kalakshepam. A specific form of dance is used to depict and narrate a story. While narrating the story, the main episodes are depicted through different postures. The way the postures are to be used to depict a story are put down in great detail in Bharat Natyam; you cannot just do as you please. It is clearly specified how to depict or represent the heart-lotus, the lotus in mooladhara, the lotus at the very top of the head, Lakshmi's lotus, and so on.

I have a great desire for attaining the divine. What is the path for this?

I am now free from all work. All such issues should be placed before Swami Niranjan. I am just chatting with you here as a formality. I am not interested in giving guidance now, as that part of my work is over. As long as I had to do that work, I did it gladly. The difficulty is that I am looking for the path myself; what way am I going to show you? I am a traveller along the path myself, and a traveller cannot be the guide. The way ahead cannot be shown by anyone, as it is an inner path. My path is within me; your path is within you. To find the path inside you, you will have to light your own lamp. My torch will not help.

This is the view of all great saints: my path is my own individual one and your path is your own. For a long distance, the paths are the same. Along that path even I travel and so do you; however, after some time all roads become individual and personal. At this point, you have to increase your own effort, the power of your own thought processes. This does not come easily. Yes, Adi Shankaracharya and Swami Vivekananda attained this easily at a very young age; however, they were not ordinary souls.

The simplest path seems to be the one you have shown to us in the last few years: develop a relationship with God.

No path is easy. If it was easy, nobody would ask another, nobody would tell another, and the rishis and munis would not discuss and debate so much on this subject. I am just talking about the vedic literature, not about Islamic or Christian texts. In the Brahmanas, Upanishads, the Aranyakas, the Puranas and the Itihasas, there is a lot of debate and discussion as to whether God is one or many.

*Kim kaaranam brahma kutah sma jaataa
jeevaam kena kva cha sampratishthah?*

What is the reason for this creation? Why are living beings born?

This is the first mantra of the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, in which the question is about Brahma and the creation of life. This kind of questioning went on; however, no one was able to give the final answer to it. They said, *Neti, neti* – “Not this, not this”, and left it there.

No one has ever been able to give the answer to whether potassium cyanide tastes sour or sweet. In the same way, no one has been able to explain the way to reach the Supreme God, or how to hear His voice or have a glimpse of Him. Is he like the clouds? Or like fire? Or like light? Is the Supreme God like a beautiful woman or a beautiful man? Or is He in the form of a snake? The rishis and munis said, “God is everything, but not this, not this.”

One has to search for one’s own path. It is not so easy that Swami Satyananda can tell everyone about it. Even if God Himself comes to explain this to you, you will not understand, as the language in which He speaks is totally unknown to you. He will go on speaking; however, you will understand nothing. First you need to have the ability to understand God’s language, and God’s language is the language of *mouna*, silence: *Mounam sarvam khalvidam Brahma*.

There are many kinds of mouna. First is the mouna of the senses. It is extremely difficult to quieten the senses. The driver can be controlled by telling him not to drink; however, who can control horses? Especially the horses that have been given no training, the wild horses who have only been restrained by reins: one runs to the left, the other one runs off to the right. There will definitely be an accident.

Even the mouna of the mind cannot be attained and maintained. The mind keeps on talking, the waves of thoughts keep on flowing in the mind; this activity does not stop for even a moment. The body dies, the supports of the senses die, yet the activity remains in seed form; it does not die. The plant has been cut down, but the seed remains. This path is not easy.

Janma janma muni jatana karaahee, anta raama kahi aavata naahi.

Again and again, over the course of many lives, the munis, evolved beings, keep on making the effort. However, they are not able to arrive at their goal.

This path is not only of one or two lifetimes. One does not become a doctor in just one year. One does not become a graduate in just one year. Just as it takes fifteen to sixteen years to graduate, the jivatma needs to pass through at least eighty-four thousand life forms. This is the last one; human incarnation is the last life form. In a sense, you are at the university level now. Prior to this, you were going through primary and middle school, through various other life forms: insect, worm, moth, bee, and so on.

Yoga education and instruction for children

Teaching children is a science, which is called pedagogy. If you teach anything to children you have to pay heed to child psychology. According to pedagogy, if you want to teach yoga to children, you must start with yoga nidra, not physical education. This is the view of those people who have done a lot of work in this field.

We have a yoga teacher from our tradition in France, Swami Yogabhakti, who used to teach English in secondary schools there. She had this idea in her mind to begin teaching yoga to the children there. She went on doing so, and then she invited me to one of her seminars. In the seminar she said that whatever the children like, they tend to do that activity with a lot of interest; however, what they dislike, they do not do at all. That is why it is important to initially create the interest and start from that point. Therefore, she began by first doing yoga nidra with the children. The children's minds experienced some peace by doing yoga nidra and gradually they started studying other things. She has written about this several times in *Yoga*. Even Swami Niranjan was taught yoga nidra first; I was his teacher. Through yoga nidra, the teacher creates a favourable impression in the child's mind.

Don't the children's guardians have a problem with this?

Guardians the world over have a problem. They send their children to school to learn how to pass examinations, not to gain knowledge. That is their main goal. Even passing is not the main goal; getting a job is the main thing.

These days, education is result-oriented. If the guardians get to know that what you are teaching will be of use to their children's ability to earn a living, they will say yes. Otherwise they will say no. This is the Kali Yuga. Artha and kama are the main purusharthas of this age, not dharma and moksha. Whatever effort a person makes, it will be in pursuit of *artha*, material prosperity, or *kama*, fulfilment of desire. Even undertaking the difficult trip to Kailash-Mansarovar will be done with this goal in mind. Even service to the guru will be done with this motive; five hundred litres of milk will be offered at Baidyanath Dham for this purpose.

In this age, if a person wants to walk the path of *dharma*, right living, and *moksha*, liberation, the entry doors are artha and kama. You may learn yoga, pooja, austerities, samadhi, pranayama, but the only open doors you will find are of artha and kama. If you wish to take children down the road of

dharma and moksha, the guardians will say, “No, what is he going to do with this yoga, become a mendicant?” However, if you tell them that by getting a degree in yoga he can find a job paying ten or fifteen thousand rupees and can go overseas, they will promptly give their consent.

When I first opened the ashram near Lal Darwaza in Munger, I conducted fifteen-day residential yoga camps, and I charged twenty-one rupees. People used to criticize me, saying, “What kind of a mendicant is he? He is selling yoga!” Nevertheless, it has been my habit to take something in through one ear and let it out through the other. I kept doing my work. Now, when I have stopped teaching yoga, thousands of people around the world are teaching yoga.

In India, yoga education is not well established; however, overseas there are very good facilities. There are yoga schools in each town and village. A lot of women have started teaching yoga. They buy or lease an apartment, convert one room into a yoga studio, teach yoga to one or two people for an hour and then come to India for a refresher course every year. They have a good income.

We have been told that children should be taught yoga after the age of eight. Why is that?

Modern psychology as well as our ancient texts say that by the time children reach the age of seven, they have finished taking in mental impressions. After that age, they cannot take in any more. These impressions are related to the seeds of your personality, due to which you become a thief, dacoit, sadhu, a learned man, a crook, murderer or millionaire. That seed is complete by the time you are seven, and this seed is protected by the mother, not the father.

Almost all the interaction a child has until the age of seven is with the mother, yet sometimes the mother is illiterate, uneducated and unaware. She can rock the cradle and sing lullabies; she cannot do anything else. She does not know that the child is not unaware and ignorant, but it is a super-fast camera that is absorbing each and every thing and is listening

to each and every sound. The fights between mother and father are being recorded inside. Many times the mother abuses the child, beats it, fights with the neighbour or sister-in-law; all this is recorded. That is why it is said, *Matah param guruh* – “Mother is the first guru.” Mother is not only the one who gives birth, she is also the guide, the guru. This is the meaning of the word ‘mother’.

After the age of seven, the brain of a child begins receiving instructions: “Speak the truth, do not lie, do not fight, wash your hands before meals.” All these things are understood by the child through its intelligence. The knowledge that is absorbed when these instructions are understood is not the real personality of an individual. This is only the external personality, the social personality. When people meet each other and talk to each other, that is the social personality; however, what you think about each other in your hearts, that is your true personality, and that is formed by the age of seven. This is why psychology says that internal learning ends by the age of seven.

This does not only apply to people; even dogs are like that. By the age of six months a dog’s instruction is complete. Later it cannot learn anything new. Before the age of six months, you can tell it, “Poop here, but not there,” and it will do that for the rest of its life. My Bholenath does not poop here. Impossible. He will go straight to the place made for him, as he was taught before he was six months old. Now he has grown, if he attacks you and we stop him, he will definitely stop; however, he will attack you again. That cannot become a part of his personality, as he is past the age where he can learn.

Our real education or instruction is only until the age of seven. That is why we should give our girls much more education, understanding, capabilities, rights and opportunities. Today’s girls should have knowledge and experience of society. Civilization, culture, history, politics, war, hatred, love, thieves, rebels, prostitutes, crooks; they need to know about all these things. They need to know about all

this much more than men do. The problem is that the mother knows nothing and the father knows everything, but what can the poor father do? He has hardly any direct contact with the child. He is the husband of the mother of the child; that is why he is known as the father. An educated, cultured mother is essential for the child.

How are the seeds of these mental impressions sown in a child who loses the mother at the age of two or four?

There must be another mother for that child. Even if you do not remarry, find a second mother for the child. Another mother is a necessity. A child stays only with women when it is young; this is its nature.

When a girl is about to become a mother, she should know that her thoughts, her diet, her behaviour, her talk, everything affects the child growing in her womb. Every act of the mother has an effect on the child. The mother thinks, ‘When the father returns home today, I will fight with him.’ As soon as he arrives, she sulks. The father asks, “Is there no tea?” She replies, “Make it yourself, I do not have the time.” All these things affect the child inside, as it is an integral part of the mother’s body and mind. Just as a thumb or the nose is one part, the child within the womb is also a part of the mother’s body. She nourishes it for nine months. Every emotion that the mother feels has an influence on the child.

Perhaps that is why it is said that when a mother is giving milk to her child, she should not cry; otherwise, she is giving the child tears and not milk. She should not have any negative thoughts during that time either.

This is related to a scientific principle. When you are angry or frightened, the hormone adrenaline is produced in your body. It has been seen that when animals are being taken to the slaughterhouse, the adrenaline in their body shoots up from sheer terror, and when you eat that adrenaline-filled meat, fear enters into you as well. Why are meat-eating people

generally more cruel? A fearless person can never be cruel. The one who is fearful picks up a stick.

There are many such issues that need to be included in our science of child-rearing and it should also be explained to girls. This is the responsibility of the mother. The birth of a child is no less than a miracle. From a tiny little cell creating a being that has 72,000 nadis, ten senses, who is such a big creature with such a big head, is no small feat! This is why the knowledge of child-rearing is a very important science. This is what society is established upon and it will be the foundation of the future as well. If a mother takes proper care of childbirth and imparts the right instructions to the child, a different kind of civilization can be created. The most important thing is studying spiritual books and stories about saints, great people, pure beings and brave souls. The food consumed must also be pure and nourishing.

In India, a vegetarian diet is considered to be the best diet. Now even those countries that are predominantly meat-eaters, are beginning to consider vegetarian food to be better than non-vegetarian food. Doubtless, they cannot be totally vegetarian, as they have their own limitations. The combination of dal, rice and vegetables is the best food. I do not think this balanced nourishment needs any changes made to it. Of course, instead of plain rice, you can have khichari or pulao; it will not make much of a difference.

We have started drawing classes for the children in our schools and their interest and dedication is increasing.

Children like drawing very much. The children from the villages here make drawings and pictures and send them to me. Drawing straight and slanting lines, filling in colours, these are in their samskaras. It seems to be a part of their mind. That is why we give these children drawing books, colouring pencils, water colours, and other such things. They all like to draw and make pictures, some of Shiva and some of Ganesha. They even draw my picture. The children here

seem to be naturally inclined towards drawing and art; they do not need to be taught.

Teach children through whatever medium they like. Children like to play, sing, dance, and have fun. In the nearby middle school, the children were taught the *Ramcharitamanas* and they learnt it by heart. When I listen to it from here, it sounds as if they have been learning it for years. It is through such things that the personality of the children will develop and progress. What children are being taught in rural schools is of no use to them. I am not saying this from a critical point of view, rather from a perspective that is healthy and helpful. Our education system is wrong. I am not talking about the education in cities, although I can make an assessment of that as well. I am talking about rural education. In the villages, what is the boy going to do after middle school or matriculation? He may farm, tend cows or become a labourer, and he learns nothing about these things. In school he has been taught history, about Ashoka, Akbar and Aurangzeb.

Rural children must have a good knowledge about the weather. Will it rain today or not; is it an easterly wind or a westerly one? I asked for *Bhadri's Sayings* from Varanasi and gave it to Tetu Ramani, the village headman. I said to him, "Tetu, read this. Then you will know all about the weather. In the month of March, you will be able to tell whether or not there will be a drought this year." These people should know about planets and constellations. Which is the constellation that has come today; what time will the sun set tomorrow? All this information is needed. The farmer's sons tend cattle; they need to know about the different kinds of cattle. What are the different breeds of cows; which ones will produce more milk? Nothing of the kind is taught in the schools. Schools teach them nothing about seeds, or about farming or animals. If nothing else, at least teach them to drive autorickshaws.

Rural children are taught useless things, like geometry and arithmetic. This is all for people who have money, as it will be useful when they do a BA or an MA. However, these boys in

the villages belong to the less-privileged classes of society and not even one or two of them will leave this place and venture out. They have no means to advance. Even if you give their fathers money to educate them, it will be spent on marriage and similar things. After all, if they do not get their daughters married off, they will become outcaste. If they cannot gather enough money for a dowry, they will marry the girl off to an old man. No one knows anything about these social problems.

In India, rural and urban society is totally different. Their ways, ideas and problems are poles apart. That is why, before teaching the children anything, one should take a look at their background. The education being imparted here, for which the government is spending thousands and millions of rupees, will have to be changed. Reading, writing and a little bit of mathematics is all that should be necessary. After this, teach things which will be of practical use to the children. Mahatma Gandhi's principles on basic education are very good. In my early days, I used to go to places like Muzaffarpur and give this basic education. I used to go there and teach them about farming, animals, seeds, and other relevant things. This foundation or basic education is necessary for the rural people, as ninety-nine percent of them cannot leave their situation and conditions. If money like that in America comes to rural India, then that would be wonderful. If a big factory opens here, all the people will go and work there. However, this is not how it is. Poor countries should be educated according to their own specific needs.

Education is a social necessity, as it facilitates earning. If there is no one earning an income in a family, then that family breaks up. The husband and wife lose their way, the children also go astray, they start fighting, and if the son is of an aggressive nature, he can turn to crime, thinking 'We will loot and plunder we will earn our bread no matter by what means.' Once one member gets into crime, the others soon follow. That is why there should be a total change in education. Today's rural education is of no use to anyone.

How can this change be brought about? The government will have it do it.

The definition of a democratic government is an institution that represents your needs. Rikhia is a panchayat with ten thousand inhabitants. Do they have any representation in the government? Most of these people are labourers, some are farmers, and two or three travel to Deoghar to work in the electricity department or repair cars, and other such work. There is not a single officer among them. Not even one. This is not just in Rikhia; there are hundreds of thousands of panchayats in India in a similar situation. In India, at least sixty percent of the people are smalltime farmers or farm laborers. Nevertheless, when their children finish their studies in school or pass their matriculation and go to work in the fields, the parents feel bad. If the girls finish their matriculation and then go to their in-laws' house, the dowry goes up. I know all these things, as I have had very open talks with these people.

A girl of about ten or twelve, Sunita, comes to the ashram here. She says to me, "Even if I study, what am I going to do after that, Swamiji? At my in-laws' house, all I will do is pick up cow dung, wash the dishes, wash the clothes, massage my mother-in-law's feet and produce children. Other than this, what is there to do? I am not going to become a mayor or commissioner." I say just one thing to these girls and women, "Look here, you don't need to sign a bank passbook, nor read official notices, nor fill out income tax forms. Just learn to read and write for one reason, to be able to read the *Ramacharitamanas*."

This is the destiny of at least sixty percent of India's population, yet a higher level of education is being pushed down the throat of the whole society. It is an education that is really needed only by ten to twenty percent of the people; however, it is being given to all of them. This is the real problem. Education should cater to the needs of the majority and not the minority. Only when the people of India become aware and informed about this will the education system change.

What is the way to increase the memory power of children? My eldest son has a very bad memory; he is unable to remember anything.

Tell him he should be the one to seek a way. Let him find the way to increase his memory power. If you tell him, it will not have any effect. When he looks for it himself, and comes to know that by doing this or that memory power will increase, he will apply the remedy without even asking anyone.

Our greatest weakness is that want our children to be our mirrors. At one point in time this was a social necessity; we needed to make our society a uniform one. That is why there was an emphasis on everyone being alike, the way it is in an equal society. Now the times have changed. The youth of today have a great future ahead of them. They can become anything they like.

If I had stayed at my home, today I would be a police inspector, as my father was in the police force. I would have joined the police force and, at the most, risen to the rank of District Superintendent or Superintendent. That is a high post, yet the contentment I feel toward my achievements today would be missing. A person finds contentment only when he acts according to his own choices and preference. We are not able to apply this principle in our society today. Parents remain guardians of the children until they grow old, whereas by the time the children are fourteen or fifteen the parents should stop looking after them. The sooner the parents let their children become independent, the better it is for the children as well as for the parents. Wherever there has been any progress in the world, it is through this approach.

We must believe in our children's capabilities. The culture that can give independence to its citizens will flourish. When your children are not free, when you are not free, when your parents are not free, how can the country be free? Independence means each person can display his or her capabilities, and this happens only when one takes a risk, a gamble. Life itself is a gamble. You were born from your mother's womb; it was a gamble for sure. You got married, that was another gamble.

Children have to be gradually released from parental protection and care. They have to be told, "You are quite grown up now, think for yourself." How long will this, "Yes, father! No, father!" go on? The children do not like to do all this. Even if they do it, it is only to ensure they do not lose their father's legacy. In the West, when someone dies, a greater or lesser portion of their wealth and estate goes to the church, school, college, a charitable institution or a research institute. The son cannot expect to get everything. If he gets it, that will spoil him. This is the only way to establish a society. A society becomes strong only when its members are able to take on difficulties.

Why is the Indian society weak? Many such questions will have to be answered by society itself. Why was Emperor Harshvardhana's sister, Rajashri abducted? Is it just some ordinary occurrence that a royal princess gets kidnapped? It happened because she had no easy means of self-defence. If she had learnt karate, she would have just given a kick! She would not have had the need to even pick up her shoes. There have been many such events that society has to answer for. There is the event of Rani Padmini. Sixty thousand women in Chittor committed *jauhar*, self-immolation. Society is responsible for this, not the attackers. Their job was just to steal women so they could produce more children. Why are we not able to protect our women? It is because we have not taught our boys and girls how to become strong, how to be capable of fighting. For this reason at least, parents should withdraw their protection and shelter from the children.

After the age of fifty, each person must be relieved of at least half his responsibilities. Not those of his work; rather, those of his household. By age sixty or sixty-five they should be totally free from this. They should think, 'No, we shall not stay at home. We will go to an ashram, do some work there, have simple meals and live in peace.' Even while living the life of a householder, follow the norms of *vanaprastha*, retirement, and *sannyasa*, renunciation. This is very essential.

Satsang 20

29 September 1997



Effect of mind on body

Nowadays medical science has become very deep and vast. Nevertheless, there are still some areas that have not come within its purview, for example, the effects that different life situations have on the human body. There is fighting in the home, the son has become spoilt, the house has caught fire or the husband has met with an untimely death; there are thousands of different situations. How much and in what ways do these situations affect the body? How does fear

affect the body and what are the diseases that it gives rise to? Desire, anger, greed, jealousy, or dislike; what are the physical influences of all these?

Until now, educated people did not pay much attention to desire, anger, greed, attraction, jealousy, violence, fear, etc. When saints and sadhus would say, "Don't get angry, control your desires and wishes", people would respond, "Saying such things has just become a habit of these sadhus." Now we are coming to know the effect these factors have on the human body. There has not been much in-depth study, yet the scientists have received indications that fear affects the adrenal glands, desire affects testosterone, and anxiety affects the blood pressure in the body. Many such things will have to be added to medical science.

What effect do the thoughts that arise in the mind have on the body? Imagine that you have thought something negative about someone. You might feel, 'Okay, I thought it. What difference does it make?' However, now it has been proved through science that when a person has any kind of thought, it creates waves in his brain and there is electrical activity. This activity affects blood pressure, blood circulation, digestion, and other functions of the body. This means that disease is connected with the body, mind and spirit, all three. If those who have studied medical science turn their mind to these things, they will be quite successful. If someone comes with a complaint of a stomachache, there can be many reasons for it. The reason can be bad food, it can be due to hyperacidity, or it could be a result of some mental disturbances. In my opinion, begin by looking at his mental situation. If the mind becomes quiet and peaceful, perhaps the other problems will right themselves.

Let me tell you how this thought first came to me. I have seen many ailments cured with exorcism. This is not blind faith. I do not say that all diseases are cured; however, I have seen a lot of diseases cured by this method. When I thought about it, I felt that the diseases had not been cured by the exorcism; rather, by the easing of the patient's mental state.

The exorcism is just a support for a person's faith. The real thing is his mental state. That is when I realized a person's mental state is a very important element. People working in the field of medicine should give some thought to this.

There are many psychological illnesses in the world. In advanced countries like Japan, America, Europe and Australia such illnesses abound. There is no shortage of medical facilities or doctors, yet there is illness. There are many people who suffer from multiple sclerosis and other physical debilities. There are many such patients in England. Many women of about thirty to forty years of age get together and run care centres for children afflicted with multiple sclerosis. The government pays them for looking after these patients. It is not possible to keep a patient who has multiple sclerosis at home, as there is hardly anyone there. Very often, both the husband and wife have to go to work and there's no one to stay at home. This is why patients have to be admitted to nursing homes. Many of those people are wheelchair-bound twenty-four hours a day; they even sleep in the wheelchair. They have to twist and turn on the wheelchair. It is such a bad situation.

Swami Pragyamurti was the first person to try to bring yoga to such people. She began going to these care centres, selected four or five children and started teaching them asana and pranayama. Slowly she saw some success. When this happened, she was employed by the government to continue her work. For every patient she taught, she received money from the government. Now there are many who teach yoga to people affected by multiple sclerosis. Currently, Swami Pragyamurti teaches yoga to people suffering from AIDS. I do not how successful that has been; however, the government has appointed her to teach yoga to such people.

It is true that there is a lot of poverty and many illnesses in India, yet compared to America and Europe, it is a better situation, except for the poverty. Apart from poverty, other things are quite all right. What is usually told to people is not true; there is a lot of poverty in America and England as well. When people go there, they stay in big hotels. They do not

go to the places where the poor people live. Those people cannot leave the country, nor can they find any work. As far as education goes, it is not true that there is one hundred percent literacy there. There are uneducated, illiterate people there also.

I have observed that, from many perspectives, India is a better country. This is not because I was born here; rather, from the perspective of climate and weather, different languages, observance of auspicious periods and festivals, and the way people feel about different ideas, communities and religions, India is better.

We have Rama temples where Devi also lives. Rama's temple is Vaishnava. Vaishnavas do not use onions or garlic, whereas for followers of Devi all this is permitted. Nevertheless, the people brought Devi there as well. Such unity! After some time even Allah will come. Christ is already here. His pictures are hung in homes, and very soon he will also come to be worshipped. This is not something you will see anywhere else in the world. Nowhere else will you find such independence of communities and thinking.

I have been thinking about taking sannyasa, but I do not know whether I am eligible or not.

The biggest obstacle to sannyasa is the wish for a married life. However, once a person gets the idea in his head that he does not want to be married, there is no point in staying in the householder stage of life, as there is nothing much to be attained there. In such cases, you can attain everything in sannyasa. If someone has the thought, 'Forget it, there is nothing for me in the worldly householder life', then that person is eligible for sannyasa.

Are desire, anger, greed and the ego present because of one's samskaras or due to physiological imbalances?

It is not like that. Nature created desire, anger, greed, attraction, and so on, for the upliftment of humankind. Nature has given human beings tendencies that are coloured

by tamoguna, rajoguna and sattwaguna, and they have been given so that one keeps on doing something or the other. If desire, anger or greed were to be finished in a person, he would end up as a mud statue; he would become a vegetable and he would not do anything at all. Desire, anger, greed and attraction become the motivating factors or energies in a person. If there is no desire, he will not act. When a person does not experience desire or wishes, the mind is depressed. The condition of depression is such that a person can even commit suicide. Most of the people who commit suicide do so in states of depression.

Desire, anger, pride, greed and attraction all motivate people towards action. Humankind has been motivated to action and thus made houses, society, religion, temples, kings and emperors, castes and creeds, arms and weapons, keys and locks. Take a careful look at the basic tendencies of dogs, cats, elephants, camels, snakes, frogs or birds. These tendencies are in every one; no living creature is free from them.

Whether it is desire or anger, greed or attraction, we have given these specific tendencies a name. When we want something, we call it desire. When we don't like something, we call it anger. When there is something very good and we want to have it too, we call it greed. When a dog sees a bone and his mouth waters, that is greed. These tendencies have been with us from time immemorial, through eighty-four hundred thousand life forms, and that is how *maya*, cosmic illusion, has spread her net. The spread of *maya* has taken place because of these tendencies. Otherwise, the almighty Paramatma is an *akarta*, non-doer. It is said in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Upanishads that God is a non-doer, the soul is a non-doer. The real doer or agency of action is *maya shakti*, the power of illusion. She is the doer and the enjoyer. Purusha is the non-enjoyer, the non-doer. Maya is the shadow of Purusha; she is his companion, a part of him. Maya is also of two kinds: one is pure maya, like Devi, Chandi, and so on, and the other is impure maya, the maya of the world. This maya is also a form of God and it is she

who does everything. Whatever Nature does is supported by the three gunas or qualities of sattwa, rajas and tamas. *Sattwa* means peacefulness, *rajas* means dynamism and *tamas* means total darkness. It is from different combinations of these three that innumerable names and forms come into existence.

The elements that are mixed together to make languages such as English, Hindi, Arabic or Persian, which are spoken the world over, are three in number. There are just three sounds: A, U and M. It cannot happen with just two; you need three. All the speech in the world, all the sounds, languages, literature and words are an expansion of AUM. In the same manner, all of creation is an expansion of sattwaguna, rajoguna and tamoguna. Sometimes sattwaguna is predominant, sometimes rajoguna and sometimes tamoguna. In this age, rajoguna and tamoguna are predominant; sattwaguna is less prominent.

This is why desire, anger, pride, jealousy, greed, attraction are not considered to be redundant. It is necessary for a person to have hatred and dislike; however, it should be directed at the inauspicious, not the auspicious. There should be anger toward the demonic nature, not the divine nature. There should be desire; however, the desire should be for liberation, not towards ends that tie you down. This means changing the direction and purpose of these very rules. Surely you can do that much.

Desire is simply the strong wish to attain something. How many types of wishes like this exist? All the desires in the world can be classified into three categories: vitteshana, putreshana and dareshana. There is no fourth desire, only these three. The first, *vitteshana*, is the desire to acquire wealth, money, property, farms, orchards, clothes, jewellery, and things like this. The second, *putreshana*, is the desire for a child; one wishes for a son, a daughter, a grandson, a family, an heir. The third is *dareshana*, the desire for a woman, for a man; the wish to be married. All desires are part of these three.

What is desire? Our rishis and munis say that the basis of all desire is related to objects, and in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:62–63) it is said:

*Dhyaayato vishayaanpumsah sangasteshoopajaayate;
Sangaatsanjaayate kaamah kaamaatkrodho'bhijaayate.*

*Krodhaadbhavati sammohah sammohaatsmritivibhramah;
Smritibhramshaad buddhinaasho buddhinaashaatpranashyati.*

When a man thinks of the objects, attachment to them arises; from attachment desire is born; from desire anger arises. From anger comes delusion; from delusion the loss of memory; from loss of memory the destruction of discrimination; from the destruction of discrimination he perishes.

When your mind comes into contact with some object, you wish to have it. Up until the time you saw a television set, you had no desire to have one. Our ancestors had never seen a car and hence they had no desire for a car. The people in England have not seen an elephant and so no one in England has a desire to have an elephant.

The saints and great souls keep repeating that when desire, anger, greed or attraction become intense, try to control them. Once the excess is under control, you can try to bring the rest under control. As long as they are carrying on in a balanced way, do not interfere with them because unnecessary interference with them finishes off any prospect of progress and success in a person's life.

Desire is a very strong force. If you don't get married, don't have children, don't have a family, don't have parents, what will you wish for? All you will wish for is some food. To desire only food, what kind of a life is that? The wish for enough to eat has been talked about only by those people who have controlled their other desires completely, like an elephant is controlled by its driver. All I need is some food and two pieces of clothing because no desires are left within me; I am talking about myself here. Yet, I still have a resolve within me. Please remember that there is a difference between a resolve and a desire, even though one cannot see the difference externally. After all, there is no external difference between gold and

brass; zinc and silver look alike; glass and diamond also look alike. A resolution is another thing altogether. A desire is for oneself; a resolve is for others. When a resolve is created in one's mind and the desires for oneself are finished, then one can say, "Just some food and some cloth."

The essence of Sri Krishna's teachings to Arjuna in the entire *Bhagavad Gita* is that there is no harm in performing actions. Krishna explains that this is our right (2:47): *Karmanyevadhikaraste* – "You have a right to action, you can perform action," but, *maa phaleshu kadachana* – "You have no right to the fruits of that action." There is nothing wrong in performing action. You can set up home and hearth, amass money, bring up children, open an orphanage, visit the homes of the poor, host a big communal meal, feed people rice and dal, give them milk; there is no harm in that. However, it should not be motivated by desires; rather, it should be inspired by a resolve.

Desire, anger, greed and attraction: these are all forms of *Mahamaya*, the great illusion. If you read the 108 names of Chandi, the 1,000 names of Lalita, or the names of any devi, you will find that all these emotions are described as her aspects. They say, "You are the form of desire"; "You are the form of anger." These are all forms of Mahamaya. It is not possible to completely remove these from your life; even the rishis and munis were unable to do so.

Even great rishis like Durvasa and Vishwamitra had such terrible anger in them. They would pronounce curses for the smallest things.

No, these are things that you have been told. If you read the complete stories of Rishi Durvasa or Rishi Vishwamitra, you will realize the facts. 'Rishi' was a kind of *sampradaya*, sect. Just as today you have doctors, lawyers, publishers, writers, painters or musicians, in those days there was a class of people called rishis. This was a group of thinkers. Rishis were spiritual aspirants and preferred a simple life. Their minds were very sharp. Rishi Vasishtha's mind was especially sharp.

The rishis adopted a married life. Married life is often assumed to be an obstacle to spiritual life; however, this has not been said by anyone, anywhere. There is no objection to married life in any of the scriptures. Sannyasa is considered to be the best, and it is the best; however, the relations between man and woman have not been viewed as an obstacle. Rishi Bharadwaja's daughter was Lopamudra, who was in love with Muni Agastya. This story is mentioned in the scriptures. To date, no one has ever cast any aspersions on the success, fame, knowledge or spiritual heights of the rishis.

Vishwamitra was not a *brahmin*, one of priestly caste; he was a *kshatriya*, of the warrior caste. He had a fight with Rishi Vasishtha and then commenced rigorous austerities. He practised a lot of austerities, yet people still referred to him as 'Muni Vishwamitra', for even though he was a great sage, he was not a brahmin. Vishwamitra wanted the title of 'Brahmarshi', but people said, "No, you stay just as a muni." He undertook such austerities that eventually he had the divine revelation and vision of Gayatri. Vishwamitra was the rishi of the Gayatri mantra; he realized it.

You are saying that he was such a great rishi, yet he had a terrible temper. That is a different story. Vishwamitra had the darshan of Gayatri; it is written in the Vedas. Later on he fought with the devatas regarding King Trishankhu. Yet, when the demons Taraka, Subahu and Maricha tried to defile the yajna he was performing, he did not use a single weapon against them, nor curse them. Instead, he went to Ayodhya to seek help, and when he reached there he did not ask for the Ishkvaku army, only for Rama.

As far as the issue of curses go, this is not confined ancient times; it happens today as well. However, not everyone's curse has the same power or effect. Assume that we have a fight. If you put a curse on me, what is that going to do? A curse is powerful only when the person giving the curse is totally flawless. Kabirdas also says:

*Durbala ko mata sataaiye jaaki moti haaya
Mare khaala ki saansa se louha bhasma ho jaaye*

Do not torment the weak, for his curse is very powerful;
Just as the skin of a dead animal (from which the
bellows are made) can reduce iron to ashes.

The person who is weak or helpless is the one whose cry has power. You can call it a ‘cry’ or a ‘curse’. A great soul like Durvasa was unconcerned with anyone in this world. He used to beg for a little food and eat only that. If anyone troubled him, he would just say, “Hey!” and get annoyed. In the earlier days, curses were more powerful, as there were many good people.

Where did the Mahabharata war actually take place?

There is a lot of dispute between historians and the people who study the Puranas. The historical and written evidence that has been found indicates that the Mahabharata war took place in what is now Afghanistan. There are two things to be kept in mind: the first thing is the location and the second is the people who fought. Look at the people of India today: Marwaris, Biharis, Rajasthanis, Gujaratis, Bengalis. If you study their psychology, beliefs and philosophies, there is no resemblance between them and the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Draupadi, Drishtadhyumna, the Pandavas and Kauravas had a different mindset. That mindset and those tendencies are not seen in the Indian people. They are all cowards; they want to stay far away from war. The people of the Mahabharata used to say, “Win or lose, we will fight for sure.” Even in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:37) Sri Krishna had said to Arjuna:

*Hato vaa praapasyasi svargam jitvaa vaa bhokshyase mahim;
Tasmaaduttishtha kaunteya yuddhaaya kritanischayah.*

If you die you will go to heaven, and if you live you will enjoy the power to rule. Therefore, get up and prepare to fight.

The saints and great souls here do not have the courage to say this. They will prevent you from fighting. The fighters are the Punjabis, the Afghans; people from the frontier. They have a different nature and temperament. From the point of view of caste, Punjabis are a fighting class. Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Govind Singh, the stories of the Sikh gurus point to their fighting nature. Look at Haryana; they are ever ready to fight. The people of Haryana speak with the gun! This is a quality of fighters.

That is why as far as the location of the Mahabharata war goes, history has another opinion. In relation to this, several ancient remains have been discovered, and many folk stories also abound. Regardless of what the reality may have been, during exile the Pandavas were mainly in the region of the lower Himalayas. In the end, after leaving the kingdom to Parikshit, all five brothers left for Shatopanth and Swargarohan, via Badrinath. Beyond Badrinath, about six to seven days trek away, is a large lake. People do not go there; it is in the middle of the Himalayas. It is called Shatopanth, and the mountains that are beyond it are called Swargarohan. There, the Pandavas melted into the snow. That is all that is known.

Perhaps the Himalayas were not that high in those days?

No, it is not like that. The continental shift that takes place in a massive way takes hundreds of thousands of years. This movement in the earth has always been in the north. There is much more water in the south, you can see that for yourself, and there is more landmass in the north; therefore, the continental shift takes place in the north. In the three to four thousand years between the Dwapara Yuga and the Kali Yuga, there has not been much of this continental shift. Whenever this happens, it is usually catastrophic and a time of great upheaval. Many islands sink, many rise up out of the ocean, there are floods and earthquakes in many places: many kinds of destruction. After the destruction, it takes many hundreds of thousands of years for creation to take place again.

The Himalayas are newer than the Vindhya-chal mountains. Anywhere around Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri or Yamunotri, you will find round pebbles similar to those you find in the sea. In the mountains, where did these pebbles come from? The Himalayan mountains are not as solid as Vindhya-chal. As a mountain grows old, the air is pushed out of it, the mud gets compacted and it becomes still and stable. However, mountains that are newly formed are not yet solid. That is why there are many landslides. There are many landslides in the Himalayas, yet it is not so in Vindhya-chal. The Himalayas are a comparatively recent event, but they are still prehistoric, as in the shastras and the Vedas there is no reference to the creation of the Himalayas. There are plenty of references to the mountains of the Himalayas; all the herbs and plants mentioned in Ayurveda come from this range. The Drona Mountain, Gandhamadana Mountain, they are all part of the Himalayas, so they were clearly well formed in the age when Ayurveda was developed.

Muni Agastya was from the north of India. He crossed the Vindhya-chal mountains and went to the south to do some work there. First of all, he compiled the grammar of the Dravidian language. What is called Tamil was originally known as the Dravidian language. Muni Agastya wrote the grammar of that language. That is why the Tamil people have great regard for him even today. Second, he is believed to have brought the Kaveri River. It is for these two acts that he is greatly revered in South India.

The *panchang*, almanac, used in South India is solar; whereas in North India, the more popular panchang is based on the movement of the moon. The almanac of the Muslims is called Jantri, and that is also based on the moon. However, the people of the Dravidian country follow the solar movement, as it is more definite; it stays the same throughout the year. In the lunar year, there is a difference of about ten days each year, which is why every three years there is an extra month to keep it aligned.

In some ways, the lunar calendar is very useful. The coming of the constellations and weather forecasts are more

accurate in the lunar calendar. The sun is not the king of the seasons; it is the moon. The moon is the king of all plants, all the *rasas*, the juices and saps which flow within them. That is why people check in the panchang for the coming of the Hasti constellation, the Uttar Phalgun or the Chitra constellation. The coming of the constellations is dependent on the moon. In North India, all auspicious work is done on *Poornima* or full moon and in the South, on *Amavasya*, dark night.

In addition to Muni Agastya, Rishi Parashurama was also famous in the South. Even today, the Parashurama Kshetra named after him is famous. To find the Parashurama Kshetra, go south from Mumbai to a place called Chiplun. Chiplun is a small town by the sea. There is an ancient temple near that town, which is called Temple of the Dark Rama. There are two Ramas there: one is dark and one is fair. Kala Rama is Rama from Ayodhya and the fair Rama is the Rama from South India. When people go there, the priests explain who is from North India and who is from the South. They say that this place is at the meeting point of South and North India. From Chiplun all the way down to Kerala, the entire coastal area is considered to be Parashurama Kshetra. There is even a government notice saying that the Parashurama Kshetra commences there.

There are many such territories or *kshetras* in India. Tulsidas wrote the *Ramacharitamanas* at Varaha Kshetra. In the same way, this is the Parashurama Kshetra. The ancestors of Rishi Parashurama had asked for the land that is Kerala to be returned from the sea. The stories describe the miraculous manner in which the land emerged from the sea; however, in our modern language one can say that he reclaimed the land of Kerala from the sea and made it suitable for farming.

In the *Ramayana* there is a reference to Maharaja Sagar having dug out the sea. How did he do this digging? What was the science or technology used?

Either talk to me about science or about the Puranas. The Puranas mention that Muni Agastya crossed the Vindhya mountains and went south. He told the Vindhya, “Go

down,” and it did so. There is also a reference to his having drunk the entire ocean. There is a constellation called Agastya. When the Agastya constellation rises, the rainwater on earth begins to dry up. That water does not dry up because of the sun. When the Agastya constellation rises, the moisture on earth reduces. This means that the Agastya constellation is capable of drying up the ocean. Now I do not want to talk about science. Agastya is a constellation that can dry up water. The ocean is made of water; Agastya dried up the ocean, so the Puranas have not mentioned anything incorrect. However, we are not talking about the Agastya constellation; we are talking about that Agastya who has two hands and two feet, who is a historical figure and considered to be a muni.

There is also a constellation of Dhruva, seen in the northern sky. Dhruva was also the son of King Uttanapada. The earth rotates and revolves, yet the northern star remains fixed. *Dhruva* means unshakable. The son of King Uttanapada, Dhruva, was unshakable from his austerities. Therefore, this constellation has been named after him. Nowadays, people are going to the moon and all the geographical features on the moon are being named after scientists or Christian saints. Similarly, the constellation Dhruva was named Uttanapada's son. Dhruva was a great soul. He had performed austerities at the age of five and had the *darshan* or vision of Lord Narayana. If such a great soul, who went away into the forest at the tender age of five, had the direct vision of God, wouldn't you make him immortal?

The word 'Agastya' also has a similar connotation. There is the Agastya constellation which dries up the water and Agastya the saint who went to South India. In the Puranas these two Agastyas have been joined together. Was the Agastya who dries up the waters the same Agastya who wrote the grammar of the Tamil language? We get confused while trying to understand this! Just as Bhagirath brought the Ganga, Agastya brought the Kaveri River from Mahabaleshwar. Close to Mumbai there is a hill station called Mahabaleshwar, where there is a jyotirlingam of Shiva. The Kaveri River emerges

from there in a very thin trickle. In the same manner as the Sonbhadra and Narmada emerge from Amarkantak, the river Kaveri emerges from Mahabaleshwar. That river Kaveri was brought by Agastya. Agastya is the name of a rishi as well as of a constellation. Vasishtha is similarly the name of a rishi and also of a star.



Swami Satyananda was born in Almora (Uttaranchal) in 1923. Drawn to spiritual life from an early age, he left home at the age of eighteen, and in 1943 surrendered himself to Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh who initiated him into Dashnami sannyasa in 1947. He served his guru for twelve years, perfecting every aspect of spiritual life. Thereafter, he travelled throughout the Indian subcontinent as a wandering ascetic.



Realizing the need of the times as scientific rendition of the ancient system of yoga, he founded the International Yoga Fellowship in 1956 and the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963. During the next twenty years, Swami Satyananda hoisted the flag of yoga in every corner of the world, consolidated BSY into a foremost institution of yoga, and authored over eighty major texts on yoga, tantra and spiritual life.

‘Satyananda Yoga’ became a tradition which combines classical knowledge with experiential understanding and a modern outlook. In 1984 he founded the Yoga Research Foundation to synchronize scientific research and yoga, and Sivananda Math to assist the underprivileged. In 1988, at the peak of his achievements, he renounced everything and adopted kshetra sannyasa, living as a paramahansa ascetic. In 1989 Rikhia was revealed to him, where he came to live and performed higher vedic sadhanas in seclusion. Receiving the command to provide for his neighbours in 1991, he allowed the ashram to help the underprivileged villages in the region. From 1995 onwards, he performed a twelve-year Rajasooya Yajna with the sankalpa of peace, plenty and prosperity for all, and in 2007 he announced the establishment of Rikhiapeeth with its mandate to ‘serve, love, give’.

Swami Satyananda attained mahasamadhi, a yogic accomplishment of discarding the body at will to become one with the universal consciousness, in 2009, in the presence of his disciples.



Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati came to the remote village of Rikhia (Jharkhand) in 1989 after entering a new phase of spiritual life. Here he performed intense austerities, exemplifying the highest principles of the sannyasa tradition. The fruit of his sadhana was distributed to the local villagers in the form of economic, social and spiritual prosperity. Sri Swamiji established Rikhiapeeth in 2007 with the mandate from his guru Swami Sivananda, to 'Serve, Love, Give'. He entered into mahasamadhi at midnight on 5th December 2009, epitomizing the highest accomplishment of yoga.

Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 3 is a collection of talks given by Sri Swamiji in 1997 to an Indian audience. He speaks on a wide range of subjects, including philosophical systems, sadhana, working for others, bhakti, emancipation of women, children's education, ancient history, modern social systems and economics. Translated from the original Hindi, Sri Swamiji's liberal, compassionate and practical views provide inspiration and fresh insights to all individuals seeking expansion of mind.



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